Shojo Beat Manga
Sand Chronicles
Story & Art by
Hinako Ashihara
3

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MANGA FROM THE HEART

THE REAL DRAMA BEGINS IN...

Sand Chronicles

Revisiting scenes and people from earlier days drives Ann to an impulsive act of desperation. Who will stand by her now? And will she ever make peace with her past...and herself?

8

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Can the sands of time bury the pain of the past?

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Sand Chronicles

Volume 8

Contents

Winter, Age 26: Prayer—5

Sand Chronicles: Epilogue—87

Glossary—189

Story thus far...

After her parents' divorce, Ann moves to rural Shimane with her mother. When Ann's mother commits suicide, Ann's new friends, Daigo and wealthy siblings Fuji and Shika, are a great support to her. But then Ann moves back to Tokyo to live with her father... In the end, it isn't distance or time that tears Ann and Daigo apart—it's their emotions.

After breaking up with Daigo, Ann moves on with her life. She graduates from college and gets a job working at a corporation. While commuting home late one night, she meets an elite businessman who is the polar opposite of Daigo. They plan to marry, but when Ann challenges her fiancé over his lack of compassion, he breaks off the engagement. Thrown off balance again, Ann sets out on a journey to visit the Nima Sand Museum, which she visited with her mother shortly before her mother committed suicide...

Main characters

Shika Tsukishima
Fuji's younger sister. Currently studying abroad in Canada.

Fuji Tsukishima
Fuji was in love with Ann for a long time but is now dating his cousin.

Daigo Kitamura
Daigo is teaching elementary school in Okayama.

Ann Minase
Ann lives with her father, his new wife and her little half sister.

Vol. 8

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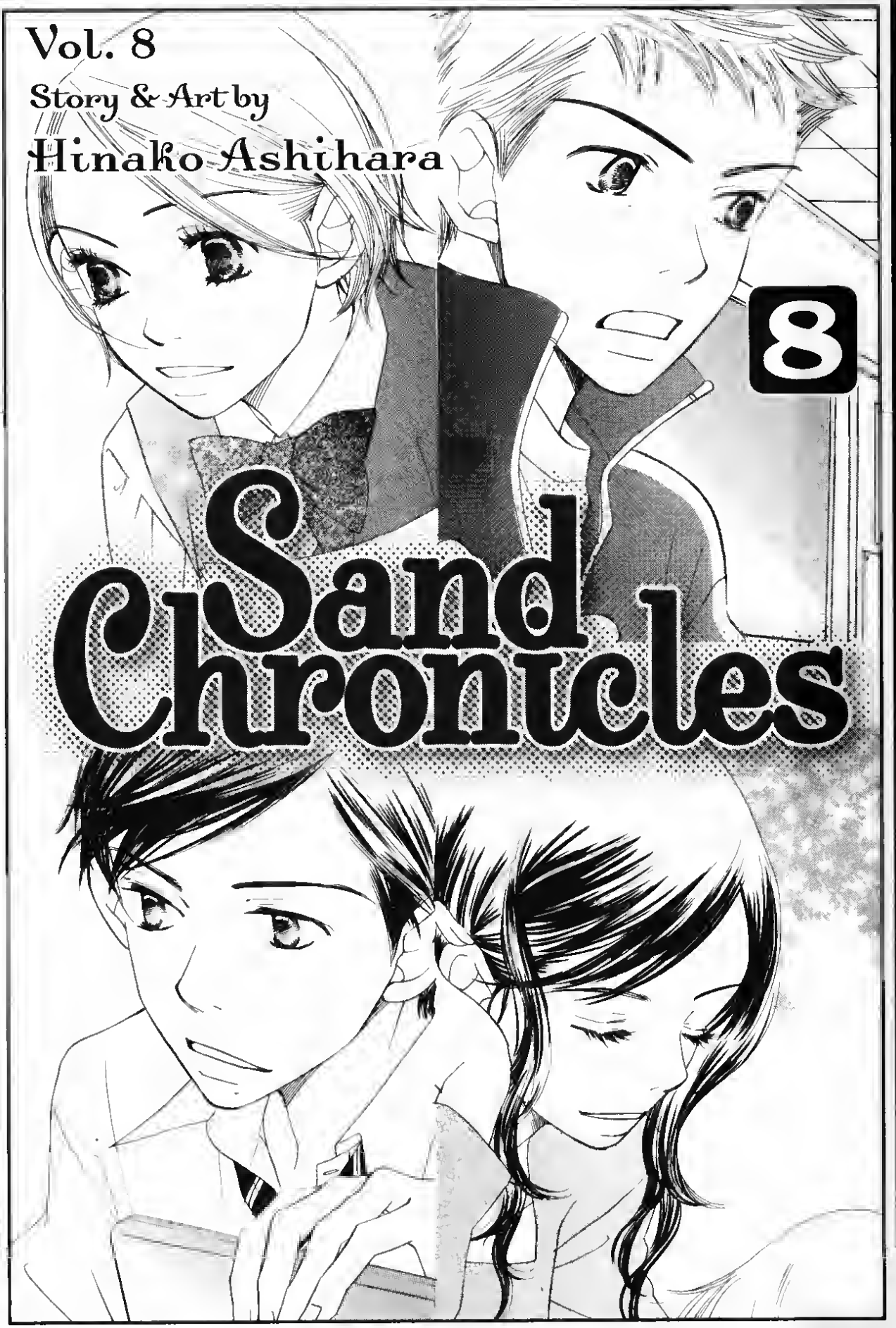

Sand Chronicles

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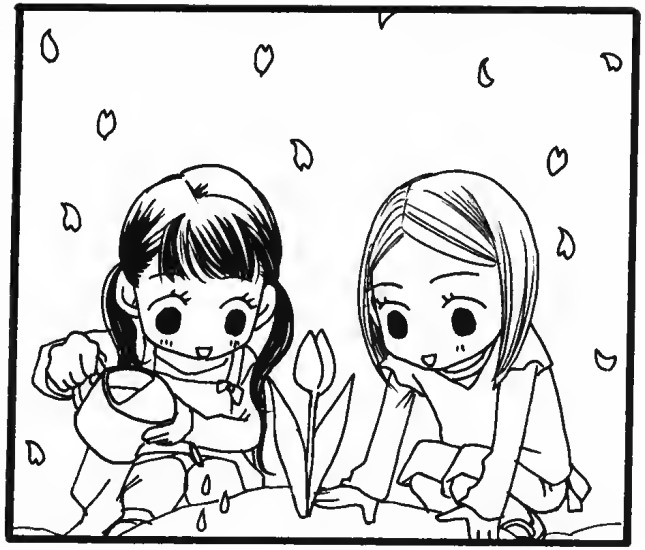
Sand Chronicles

I'M IN DARKNESS.

IN PITCH-BLACK DARKNESS.

I CAN'T FIND MY WAY OUT.

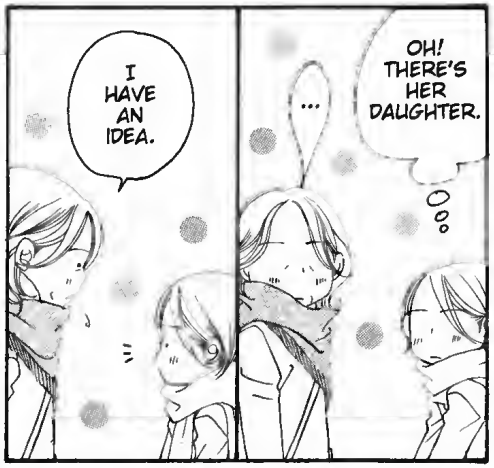


FWOOOO
...THE TRAIN WILL REMAIN AT OKAYAMA STATION.
KLAK
OUR SINCERE APOLOGIES FOR THE DELAY AND ANY INCONVENIENCE.
DUE TO THE HEAVY RAIN...
TSSHH
OKAYAMA STATION
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
NOW...
...
FWOOOO
DSHH
OKAYAMA STATION
WELCOME TO OKAYAMA...
GYAAH!
WHOA!

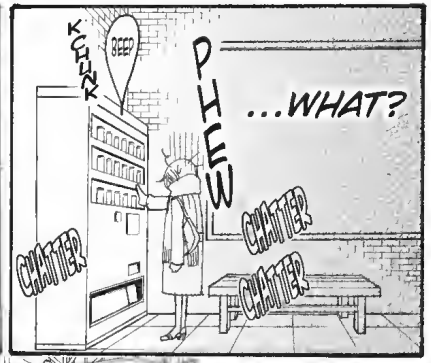
FWOOOO
HONNNK
CAN I STOP TRYING SO HARD?
NEXT STOP, OKAYAMA ...
KLAK
TSSSHH
KLAK
BUT WAY BEHIND SCHEDULE!
IF WE'D TAKEN THE NOZOMI, WE'D ALREADY BE AT THEIR PLACE.
THE SLEEPER CAR SURE WAS COMFORTABLE THOUGH!
Not for me!
FINALLY !!

OH! FROM THE TRAIN...
Last night...
...HE'S FOUND...
...HAPPINESS HERE.
THEY'RE PICKING US UP.
Come on!
DO YOU HAVE ANY PLACE TO GO?
THEY DON'T KNOW WHEN THE TRAIN WILL BE ON ITS WAY.
MOM!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

HUH?
WHY DON'T YOU...
...COME WITH US?


I HAVE AN IDEA.
...
OH! THERE'S HER DAUGHTER.

...TO SEE THE ONE-YEAR HOUR-GLASS IN NIMA.
IT'S BEEN 4 YEARS SINCE MOM TOOK ME...
What do I do now?
I'M IN OKAYAMA.


KCHUNK
BEEP
PHEW
...WHAT?
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER

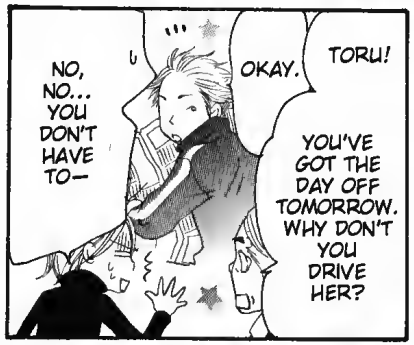
WHY CAN'T I GET THERE?
IZUMO
OKA-YAMA
TOKYO
...SO I HOPPED ON THE NIGHT TRAIN.
I REALLY WANTED TO SEE IT AGAIN ...

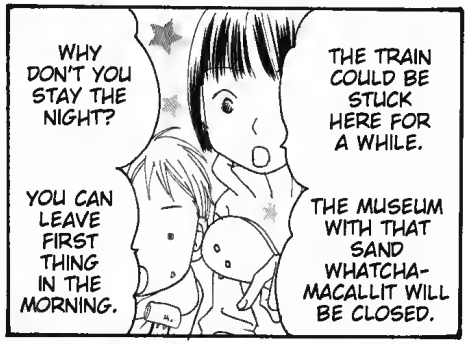
...AND GOTTEN MARRIED AND HAD KIDS, WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS AND LAUGH.
SOMEDAY AFTER WE'VE BOTH MET SOMEONE ELSE...
I WONDER IF...

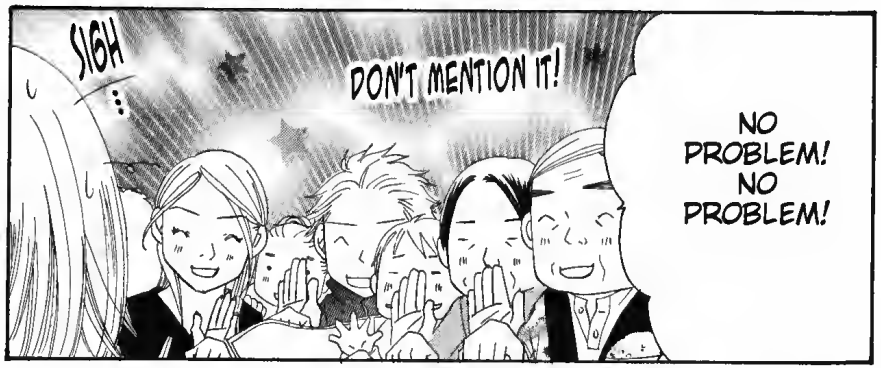
...he went to Sakura Second Elementary School in Okayama. For now... Naka
SOME-WHERE IN THIS TOWN...
...DAIGO IS A TEACHER.
Just her image

...
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
OKAYAMA ...

Move! I'm tryin' to watch TV!
WHERE'D YOU BUY THOSE CLOTHES?
WHAT?!
I told you, it's canceled 'cause of the rain!!
Hurry up! You'll be late for school !!
YOU'RE GOING TO NIMA?
DON'T RUN!!
Not during dinner!!
TUMP TUMP TUMP
MOM! WHERE'S MY FOOD?
Pass the...
YOU EVER HEAR OF IT?
NOPE.
Where's Nima?
NIMA SAND MUSEUM ?
NEVER HEARD OF IT.


NO, NO... YOU DON'T HAVE TO—
OKAY.
TORU!
YOU'VE GOT THE DAY OFF TOMORROW. WHY DON'T YOU DRIVE HER?

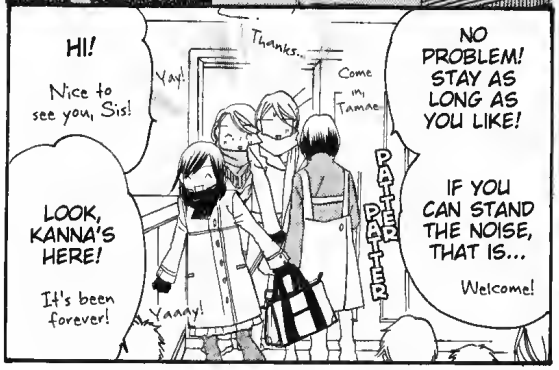

WHY DON'T YOU STAY THE NIGHT?
YOU CAN LEAVE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.
THE TRAIN COULD BE STUCK HERE FOR A WHILE.
THE MUSEUM WITH THAT SAND WHATCHA-MACALLIT WILL BE CLOSED.


SIGH...
DON'T MENTION IT!
NO PROBLEM! NO PROBLEM!

OH NO... I DON'T WANT TO INTRUDE ... I couldn't...
DON'T WORRY, WE DON'T BITE.

WE'RE GOING TO MY ELDEST DAUGHTER'S HOUSE.
OH... You told me last night.
IT ISN'T FAR. YOU HAD BETTER GET OUT OF THE RAIN UNTIL THE TRAIN STARTS MOVING AGAIN!!
COME WITH US! LET'S GO!

TSHHHH
OKAY ...
OH, STRANDED BY THE RAIN, WERE YOU?


HI!
Nice to see you, Sis!
LOOK, KANNA'S HERE!
It's been forever!
Yay!
Thanks...
Come in, Tamae.
Yaaay!
PATTER PATTER
NO PROBLEM! STAY AS LONG AS YOU LIKE!
IF YOU CAN STAND THE NOISE, THAT IS...
Welcome!

COME ON!
I've decided!

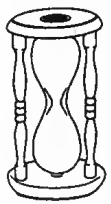
WHICH TASTES BETTER?
VS.
YOUNG WIFE
HERE, ANN. I MADE SOME NIMONO.
Enjoy!
THUD
THINGS HAVE SURE TAKEN AN UNEXPECTED TURN...
MOTHER-IN-LAW
HERE. I MADE KINPIRA GOBO.
Try it!
THUDD
Can you believe my mother-in-law? She...
Okay, thanks!
Let me help.
Can you make funny faces?
Read me a story!
THE WEATHER THE NEXT DAY WAS ABSOLUTELY BEAUTIFUL.
Visit us again sometime!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
You really helped me out.
TORU, DRIVE SAFELY!
You're a menace on the roads!
Lemme take a picture!!
LET'S MEET FOR LUNCH SOMETIME IN TOKYO! KEEP IN TOUCH!!
Promise?!
Bye, Ann!

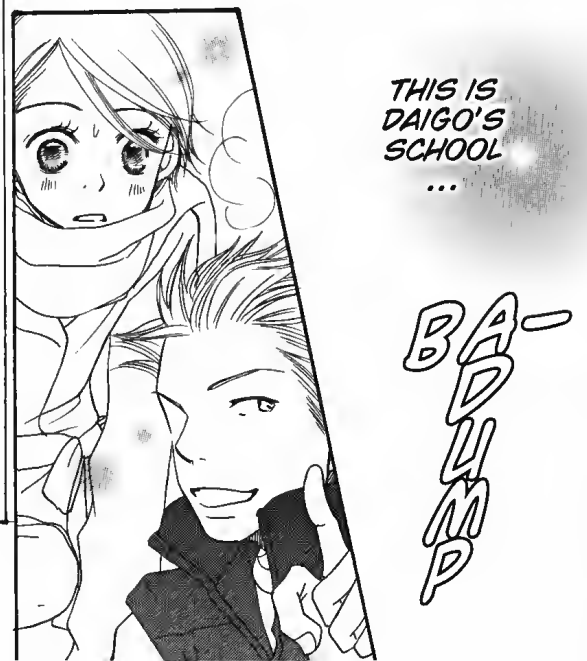
TORU...
HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE SAKURA SECOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?
...A SCHOOL ZONE...
SCHOOL ZONE
OH...
VROOM
LET'S GO!
VROOM
NO!!
YIKES
I'M NOT READY TO SEE HIM!!
SCRAMBLE
THAT'S WHERE DAIGO TEACHES.
SAKURA? NOPE, 'FRAID NOT.
HOLD ON A SEC.
NO! NO! FORGET I MENTIONED IT!
I was just asking!
THERE IT IS. NOT FAR FROM HERE.

VROOM
PEDAL TO THE METAL!!
YOU GOT IT.
Okay, then...
YOU CAN LET ME OFF AT IZUMOSHI STATION. I'LL TAKE THE TRAIN FROM THERE.
WHAT'S IT CALLED?
THE NIMA SAND MUSEUM?
BEEP BEEP
VROOM
Did someone say "drive safely"?
VROOM
HERE WE GO!
CARS AREN'T S'POSED TO USE THIS ROAD DURING SCHOOL HOURS.
Good thing we left early!
SCREECH
I'M TAKIN' A SHORTCUT.

~Winter, Age 26: Prayer-☼-

Welcome to volume 8! Thanks for reading! This chapter feels like the end to me. The next chapter is an epilogue. The main story comes to an end with this volume— but I've written some extra material for Betsucomi. It turned out to be pretty long. I know it's a little (a lot!) like cheating, but altogether the series will reach ten volumes. I hope you'll read them all!





国語
TEACHING JAPANESE ...
TEACHING PHYS. ED ...
SCOLDING HIS STUDENTS ...
LAUGHING AND CRYING WITH THEM...

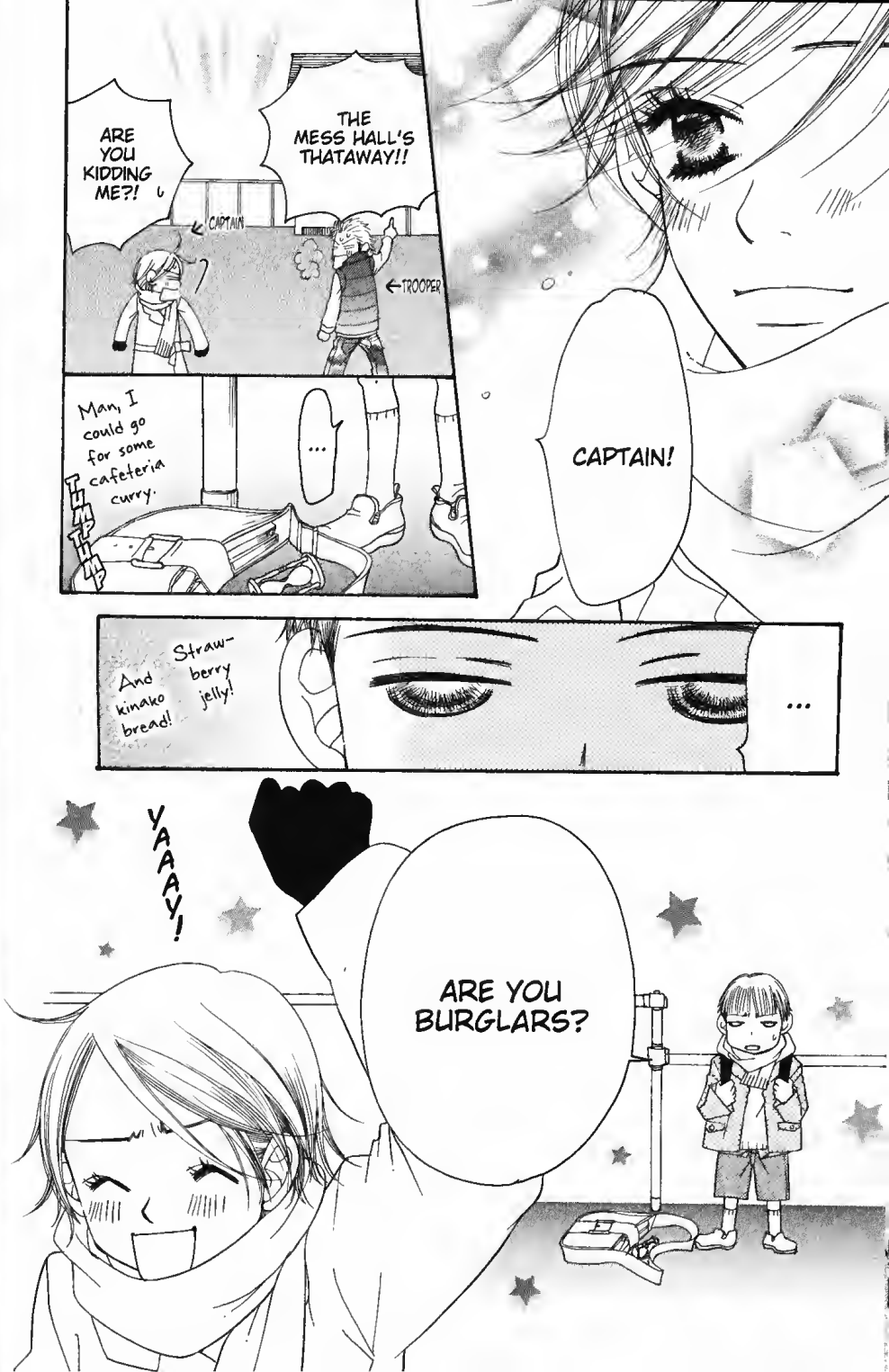
WE GOT TOO BIG!!
I can't do a flip on them!!
LOOK HOW LOW THESE BARS ARE!!
W... ♪
WHOA!
The playground! ♪
THAT THING OVER THERE WAS MY FAVORITE!! ♪
My school had one too!!
MINE TOO!! ♪♪
WHOOSH
THE TRACK IS SO SMALL!!
RUN!
Run till you drop!
I CAN REALLY PICTURE DAIGO HERE...
No more! I'm out of breath! Gimme some heart medicine!
You're too old!

WAIT!
HMM...
Can I trust you?
ALL RIGHT...
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK!!
Don't do anything drastic!
NOOOO
NOOOO
BIP
I'M TURNING YOU IN.

YOU CAN'T DO FLIPS? PATHETIC!
SECRET TRAINING? FOR... DOING FLIPS?
YEP!!
HA HA HA
GYA HA HA
LIMP!
LIMP!
I'LL LET YOU OFF THIS TIME.
FWUMP
ANYWAY, I'M JUST HERE TO TRAIN—IN SECRET.
WHACK
BIP
NOW I'M SO GONNA TURN YOU IN.

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!
THE MESS HALL'S THATAWAY!!
CAPTAIN
TROOPER
Man, I could go for some cafeteria curry.
...
TUM TUM

And kinako bread!
Straw-berry jelly!
...


CAPTAIN!
YAAAY!
ARE YOU BURGLARS?

WHAT'S WRONG?
?
...
HE'S NOT TOO SMART...
...BUT HE'S ALL RIGHT.
...THAT HOURGLASS ...
...FROM THE SAND MUSEUM?
UM...
...NOTHING.
IS...

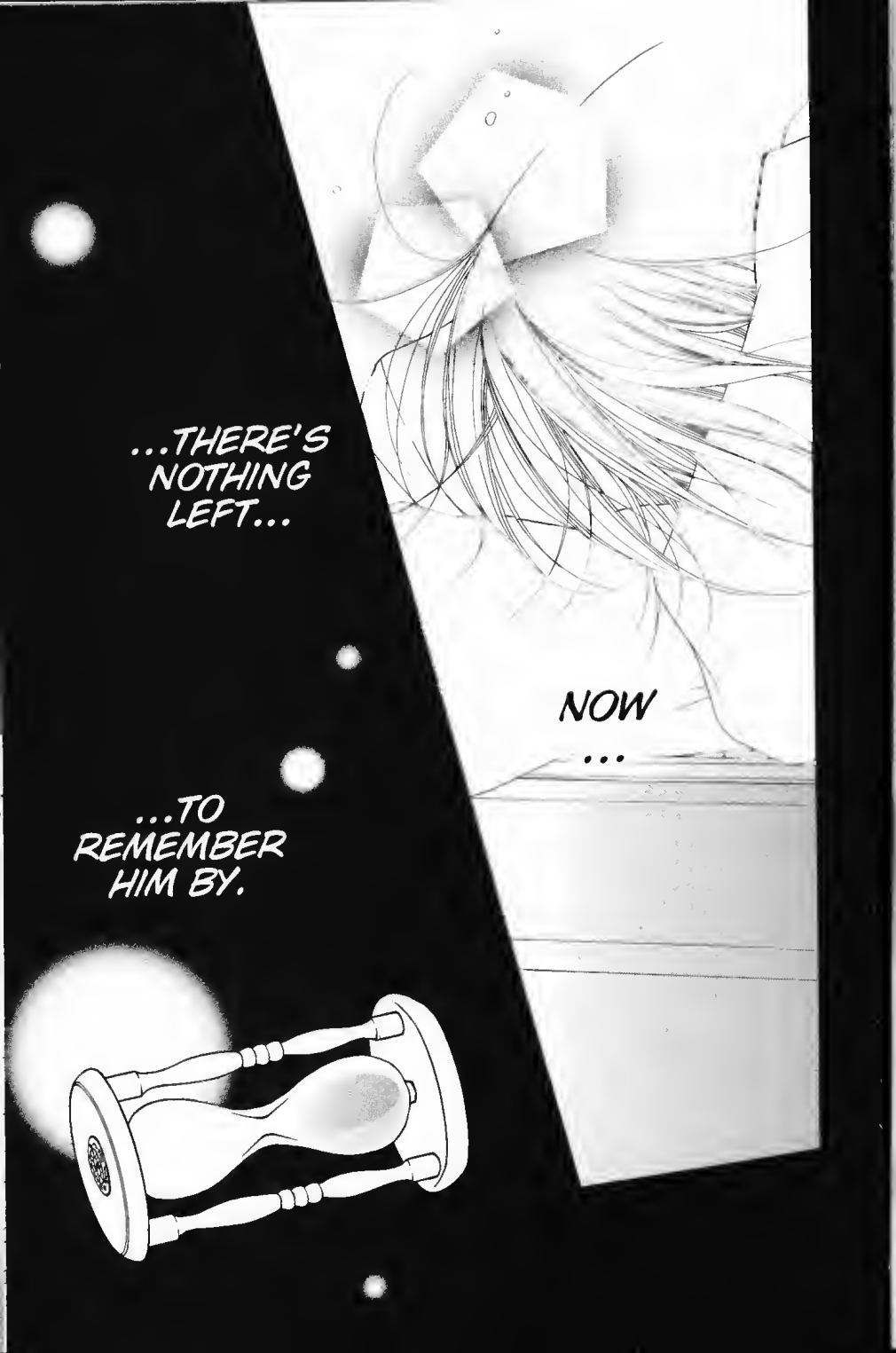
I'M THE ONLY ONE IN MY CLASS WHO CAN'T DO FLIPS!
Aw, don't cry...
SOB
SOB
BUT...
...DAIGO SAYS...
...IF I KEEP AT IT, I'LL GET IT SOMEDAY.
SNIFF
DAIGO ...?
UH-HUH!
DAIGO KITAMURA!
MY TEACHER!!

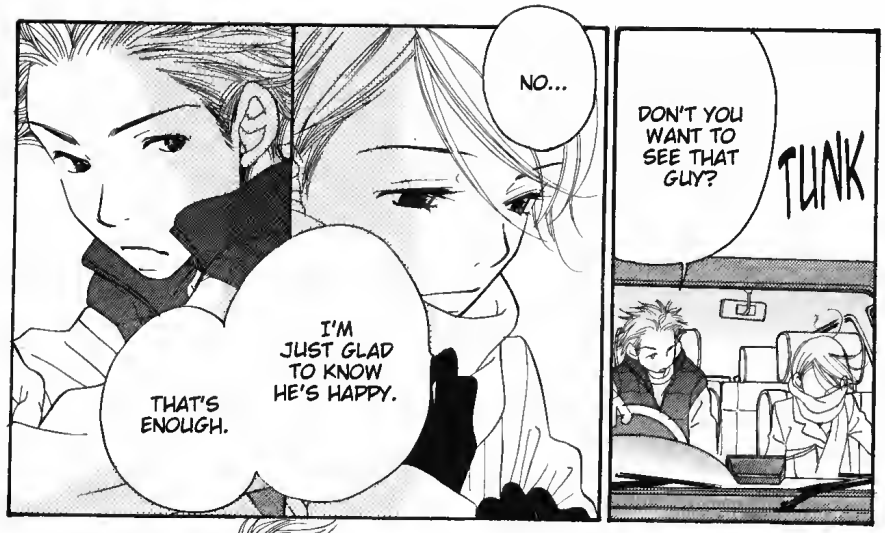
HUG
?
UH... LADY?
THIS BOY... IS A PART OF DAIGO'S LIFE.
OH, HE'S FINE. THAT'S THE BEST YOU CAN SAY ABOUT HIM.
HEH...
AND GUESS WHAT?
THIS IS ENOUGH.
HOW IS...
...MR. KITAMURA THESE DAYS?
What's up with her?
?
THIS IS ENOUGH.

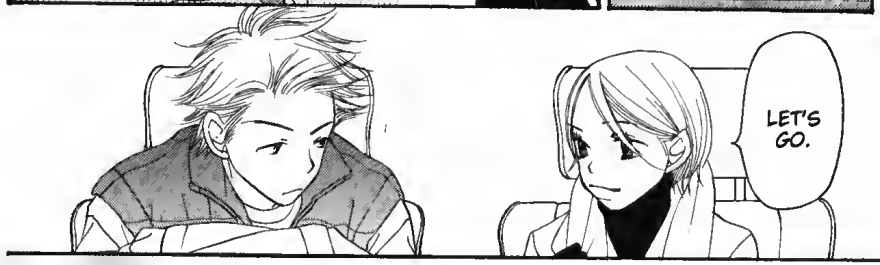
DAIGO TOOK US THERE ON A FIELD TRIP!
HAYATO AND SHUN BOUGHT SOME FOR SOUVENIRS.
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY.
You're lucky!

IF...
BYE!
Let's play again sometime!
...YOU WANT... YOU CAN KEEP IT.
IT'S KIND OF OLD AND BEAT UP THOUGH.
HUH?
REALLY?!
I PROMISE!!
...YOU HAVE TO PROMISE NOT TO TELL ANYONE I WAS HERE.
BUT...
DEAL?
YAAY!!
DEAL!
DING DONG
HEY, YOU BETTER LEAVE BEFORE THE TEACHERS GET HERE.
!!
YEAH...
...YOU'RE RIGHT.

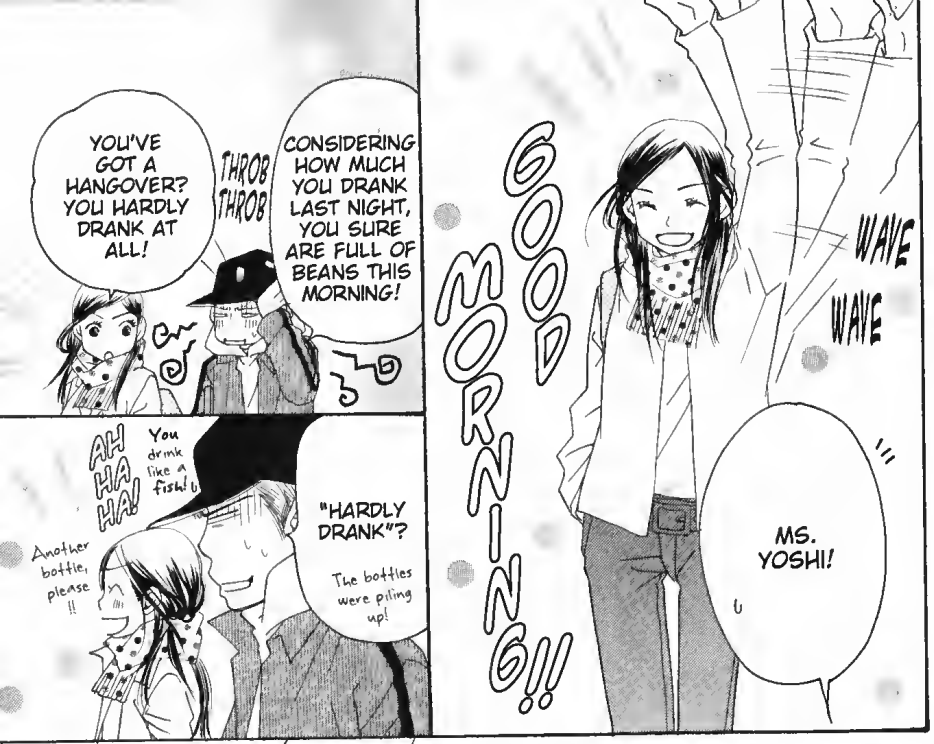
HE'S...
...GONNA GET MARRIED SOON!!
TO ANOTHER TEACHER! MS. YOSHI!
IT'S S'POSED TO BE A SECRET...
...BUT EVERYONE CAN TELL BY HOW THEY ACT!
OH, I SEE ...
HE'S FOUND HAPPINESS.


...THERE'S NOTHING LEFT...
NOW ...
...TO REMEMBER HIM BY.


NO...
I'M JUST GLAD TO KNOW HE'S HAPPY.
THAT'S ENOUGH.
DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE THAT GUY?
TUNK


LET'S GO.

I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU.
VROOM


YOU'VE GOT A HANGOVER? YOU HARDLY DRANK AT ALL!
THROB THROB
CONSIDERING HOW MUCH YOU DRANK LAST NIGHT, YOU SURE ARE FULL OF BEANS THIS MORNING!
AH HA HA!
You drink like a fish!
Another bottle, please!!
"HARDLY DRANK"?
The bottles were piling up!
GOOD MORNING!!
WAVE WAVE
MS. YOSHI!

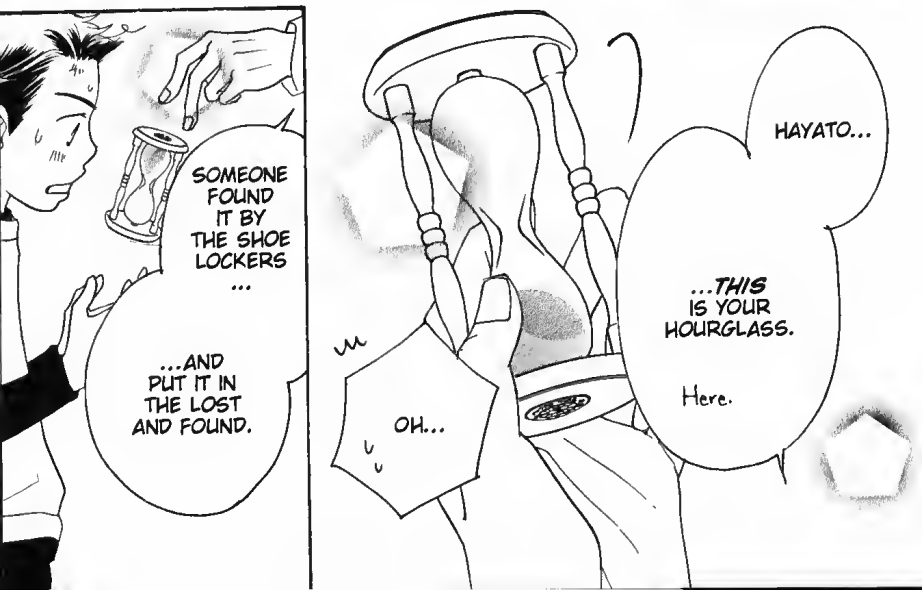
DING DONG
STAFF ROOM
CHATTER CHATTER
YOU LEFT YOUR CELL PHONE AT MY PLACE LAST NIGHT.
THE BATTERY RAN OUT.
You should be more careful.
OH. Thanks.
OH...
...I ALMOST FORGOT.

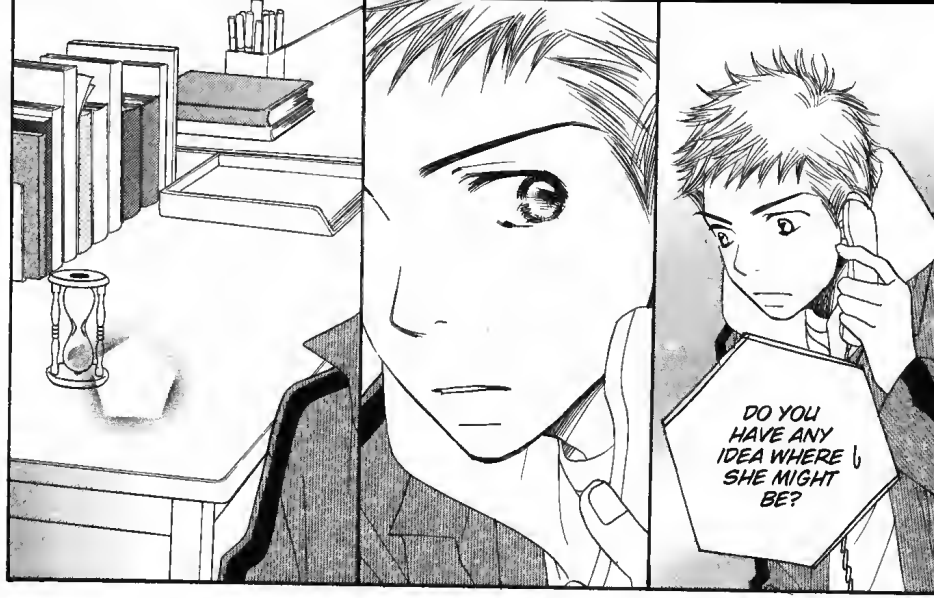
VROOM
VROOM
WHAT A RECKLESS DRIVER!
Young people these days!
DAIGO!!

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU SINCE YESTERDAY! I CALLED YOUR SCHOOL, YOUR APARTMENT, YOUR CELL PHONE...
WHERE WERE YOU?!
K...
...KEEP IT DOWN...
Please...
THROB THROB
...IDIOT !!
...AND MY CELL PHONE WAS OUT OF POWER... AND...
AND THEN I WAS AT A COLLEAGUE'S... DRINKING UNTIL DAWN...
Dunno
What's going on?
SCHOOL WAS CANCELED BECAUSE OF THE WEATHER YESTERDAY.
ANN?
WHY WOULD SHE...?
SHE HASN'T COME HOME.
HER GRANDMOTHER CALLED. SHE'S WORRIED SICK.
I'M CALLING ABOUT ANN.
IS SHE THERE?

THROB THROB
RATTLE
Not so loud!
GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE !!!
RRRING
HUH?!
RUMOR HAS IT MORE THAN ONE STUDENT HAS SEEN YOU TWO BUYING LATE-NIGHT SNACKS AT THE LOCAL CONVENIENCE STORE.
I OVERSLEPT ...
Is that all? OR DID YOU SPEND ANOTHER NIGHT AT MS. YOSHI'S?
Morning!
GOOD MORNING, MR. OKAMOTO!
KITA-MURA— YOUR HAIR IS A MESS!
WHY'S SHE CALLING ME AT WORK?
HELLO?
YOU...
YOUR MOM'S ...
...ON THE PHONE.
HUH?!
My mom?
OH...
...WELL THAT'S...
Is that any way for a teacher to behave?
DAIGO !!

I DID NOT!!
AARGH
AARGH
Give it back!
Fight! Fight!
IT'S HIKARU'S FAULT!!
HE STOLE HAYATO'S HOURGLASS!!
THEN HOW COME YOU HAVE IT?
SOMEONE GAVE IT TO ME!!
SEE? YOU CAN'T!!
Give it back!
Thief! Thief!
...!!
TELL ME WHO THEN!!
DIDN'T YOU HEAR THE BELL?!!
In your seats!
KNOCK IT OFF!
RATTLE
UH-OH!
IT'S DAIGO!!


SOMEONE FOUND IT BY THE SHOE LOCKERS ...
...AND PUT IT IN THE LOST AND FOUND.
OH...
HAYATO...
...THIS IS YOUR HOURGLASS.
Here.

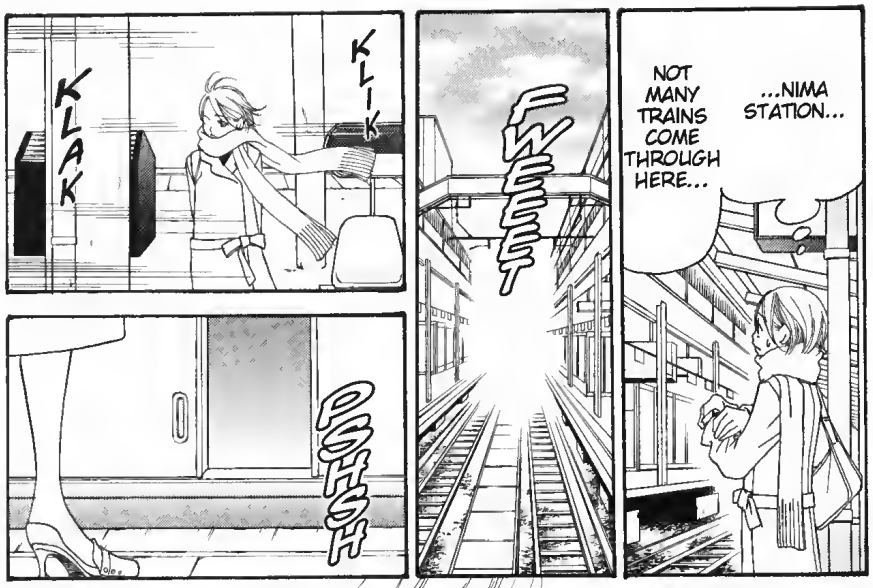

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE SHE MIGHT BE?

3-1
CHATTER
CHATTER
I TOLD YOU ...
...I DIDN'T TAKE IT FROM YOU!!
You're lying!
Nuh-uh!
Good morning!
...
CHATTER CHATTER CHATTER

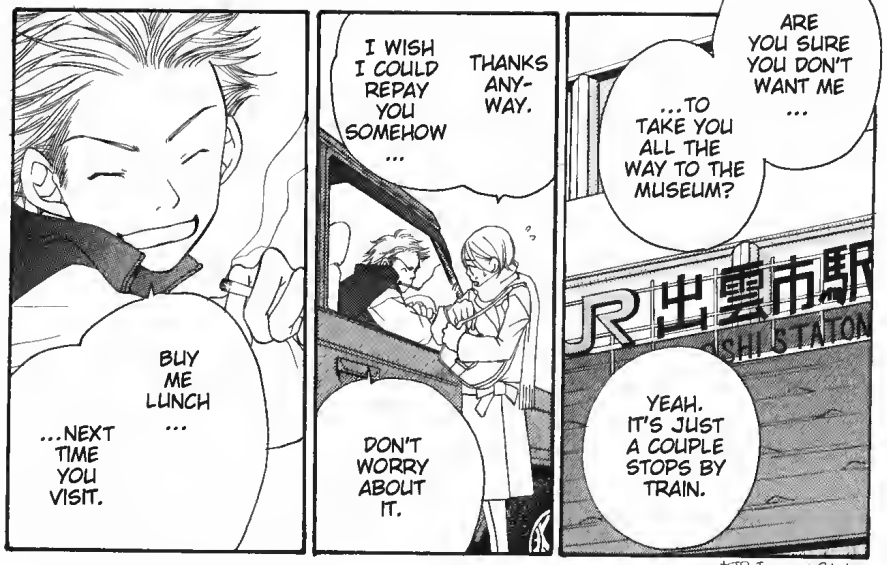
SOME LADY...
TELL ME.
IT'S IMPORTANT.
WAS SOMEONE HERE?
AT SCHOOL?

HIKARU ...
SHOW ME THAT.
SHAKE SHAKE
HIKARU!
UM...
NOW APOLO-GIZE TO HIKARU.
B...
BUT...
POUT
IT'S HIKARU'S FAULT!!
WHY WON'T HE TELL WHERE HE GOT IT?

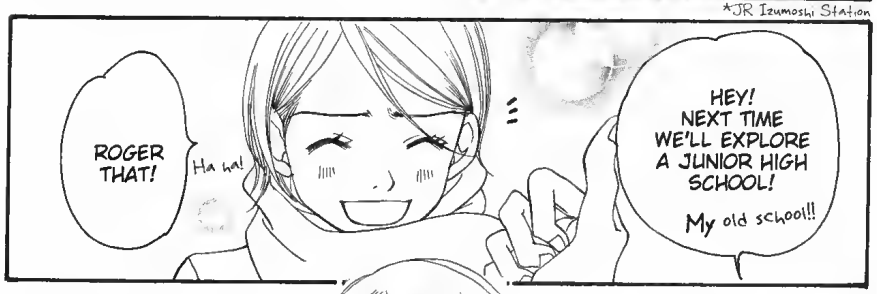
...DID YOU GET THIS?
I CAN'T TELL! I PROMISED !!
PLEASE?
WHERE ...

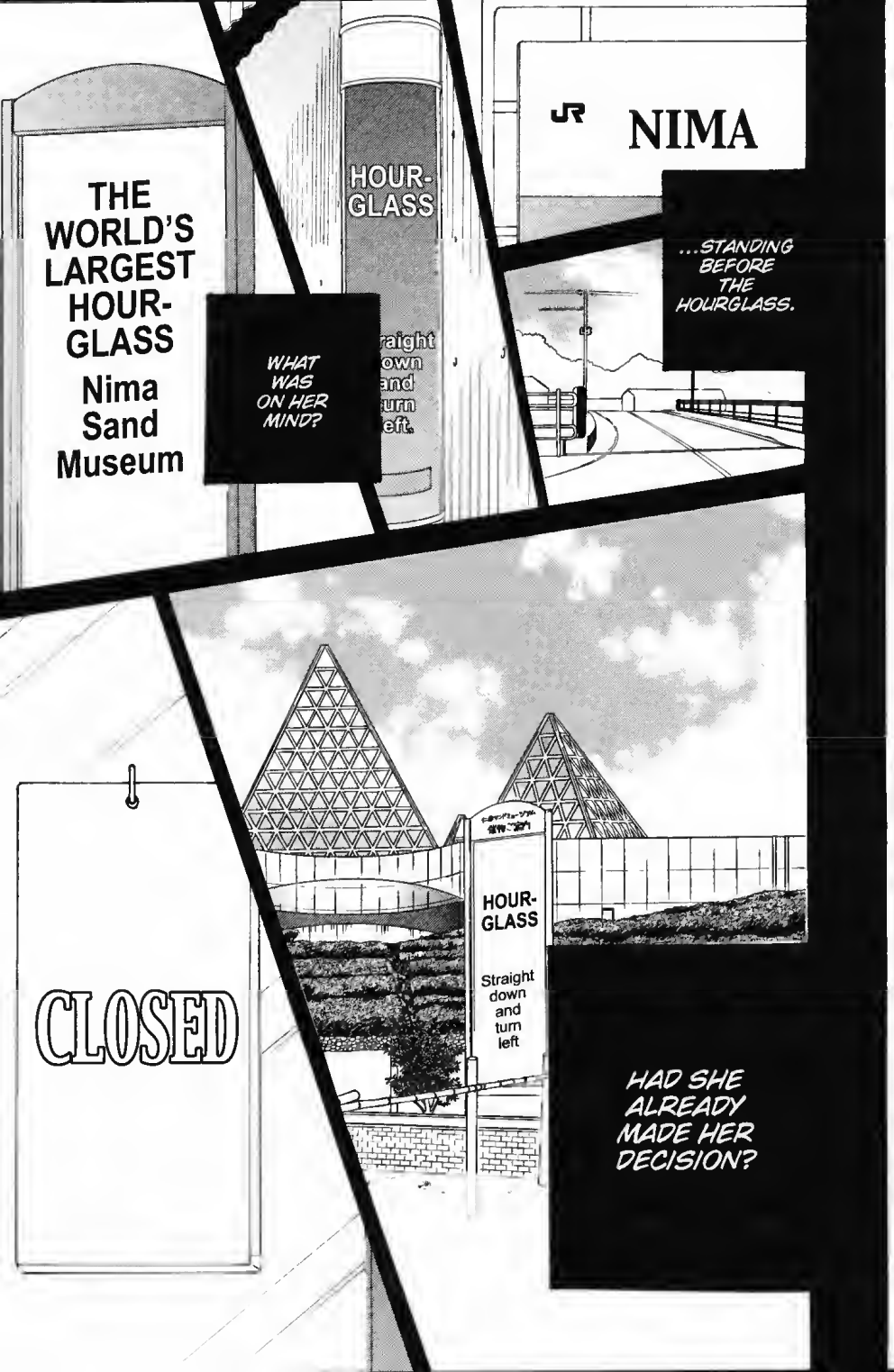


"THEY HAVE A GIANT HOURGLASS THAT MEASURES A WHOLE YEAR. SHALL WE STOP BY BEFORE WE GO TO GRANDMA'S?"
"YEAH!!"
"THE NIMA SAND MUSEUM?"
KLAK
KLAK
MOM!
I CAN SEE THE OCEAN !!
THE OCEAN !!
How pretty!


BUY ME LUNCH ...
...NEXT TIME YOU VISIT.
I WISH I COULD REPAY YOU SOMEHOW ...
THANKS ANY-WAY.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT ME ...
...TO TAKE YOU ALL THE WAY TO THE MUSEUM?
YEAH. IT'S JUST A COUPLE STOPS BY TRAIN.

*JR Izumoshi Station




THE WORLD'S LARGEST HOUR-GLASS
Nima Sand Museum
HOUR-GLASS
JR NIMA
...STANDING BEFORE THE HOURGLASS.
WHAT WAS ON HER MIND?
CLOSED
HOUR-GLASS
Straight down and turn left
HAD SHE ALREADY MADE HER DECISION?

"...EVER SINCE I MARRIED YOUR FATHER."
"I'VE JUST BEEN SO BUSY THAT THE DAYS HAVE BEEN FLYING BY...
"ONE YEAR LOOKS SO LONG LIKE THIS ...
...ALWAYS WONDERED ...
KLAK
...HOW SHE FELT THAT DAY...
I'VE...

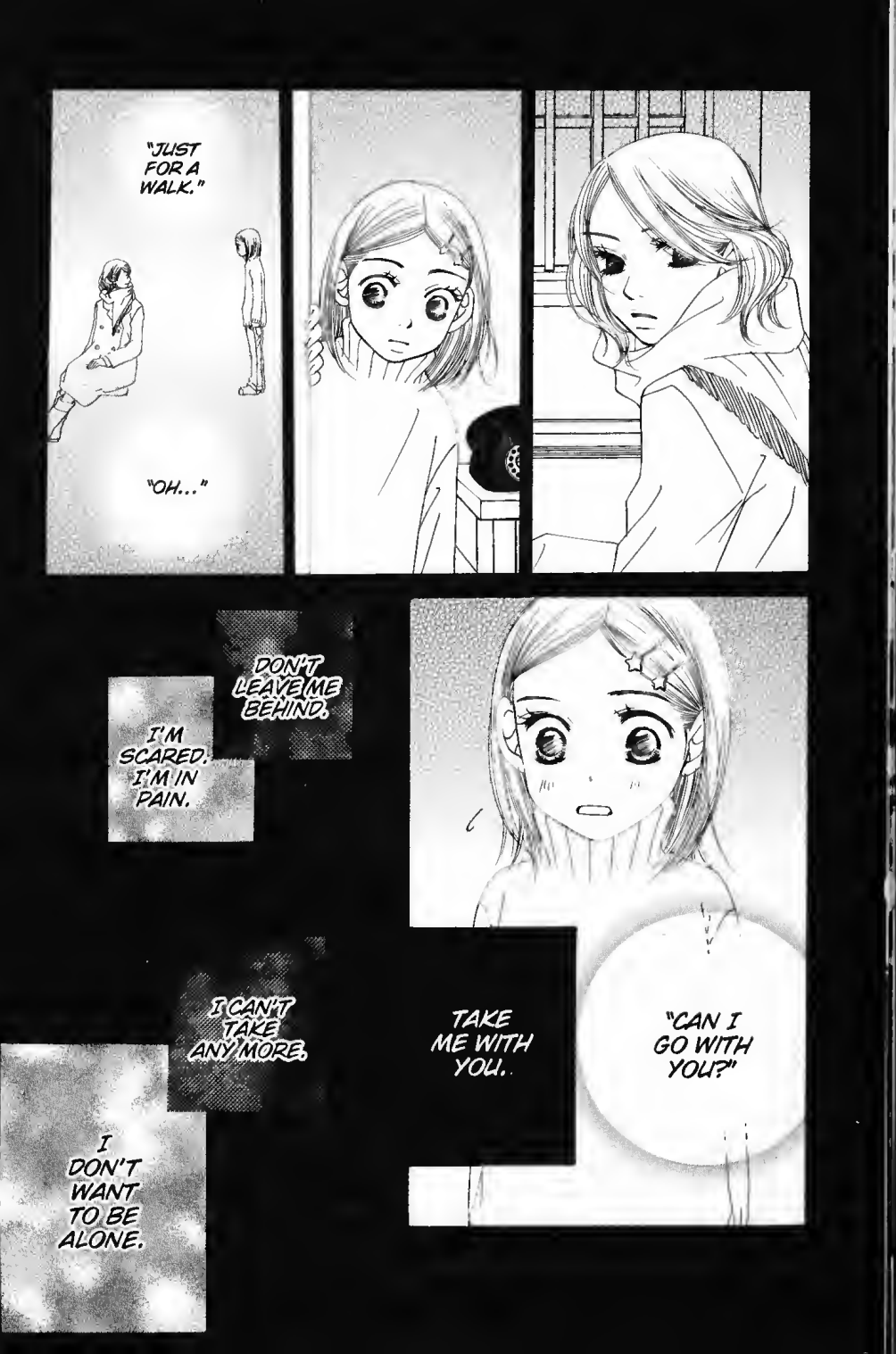
WHOOOEEE!
ZSSSHHHH
KOTOGAHAMA BEACH IS NEAR HERE.
IT'S JUST LIKE THAT TIME...
ZSSSSHH
IT'S COLD!!
FWOOO
...DAIGO AND I CAME HERE WHEN WE WERE 20.
MY FEET ARE COLD!!
BRRR!
OH! THE SAND REALLY DOES SQUEAK! LISTEN! IT SQUEAKS!
SQUEAK

WHAAAT ?!!
CLOSED
ZSSSSHH
OH...
...THAT'S RIGHT...
ZSSSSHH
I'M ...
SO TIRED ...
PHEW
I can't move ...
I'VE NEVER FELT...
I can't take any more
TUMP TUMP
STUMBLE STUMBLE
...SO STUPID IN MY LIFE...

SMASH
!
OW!!
"YOU'VE GOT TO BE STRONG."
"YOU CAN'T ACT PITIFUL TO GET WHAT YOU WANT."
"YOU CAN'T TURN BACK TIME."
Cheer up, Ana!!
YOU MIGHT CONSIDER THERAPY.
"YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF TOO HARD."
THAT HURT!
MUST HAVE STEPPED ON SOMETHING ...
TUMP
STOMP

DAMMIT!
DAIGO SAID IT DEPENDED ON THE WEATHER, BUT...
SQUEAK! I SAID, SQUEAK!!
UMPH!
STOMP
HUH?
TUMP
...LIKE IT DID THEN!
IT DOESN'T SING...
TUMP
TUMP
...
TUMP
TUMP
YOU DON'T CRY OVER EVERYTHING.
"CONDITIONS HAVE TO BE JUST RIGHT FOR SAND TO SQUEAK."
SH TUMP
"IT WON'T SING IF IT'S DIRTY?"
"SAND THAT STOPS SQUEAKING IS CALLED 'KILLED SAND'."

DRIP
D-R-R-R-R-D


"JUST FOR A WALK."
"OH..."
DON'T LEAVE ME BEHIND.
I'M SCARED. I'M IN PAIN.
I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE.
I DON'T WANT TO BE ALONE.
TAKE ME WITH YOU.
"CAN I GO WITH YOU?"

I FEEL ...
ZSSSHH
I'M BACK IN THE DARKNESS ...
WHERE ...
...ARE YOU GOING, MOM?
...SLEEPY ...
OH...

"I'LL GIVE YOU MY BAGS!!"
"YOU LOOK TIRED, ANN. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?"
"KEEP IN TOUCH!!"
"I WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU."
"ANN!"
"ANN!!"

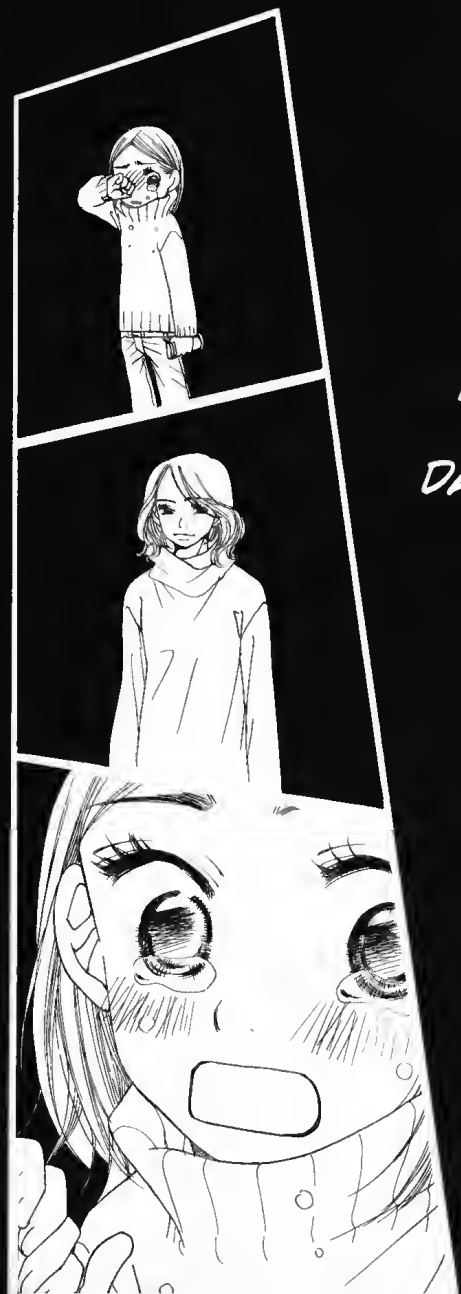
"GOODBYE!!"
"OKAY."
TAKE ME WITH YOU.
"NO, YOU STAY HOME."
"HAVE A GOOD DAY!"

GASP
BA-DUMP
WHAT...
BA-DUMP
...AM I DOING?
BA-DUMP
"ANN!"

...TO EVERY-ONE!
SOME-BODY!!

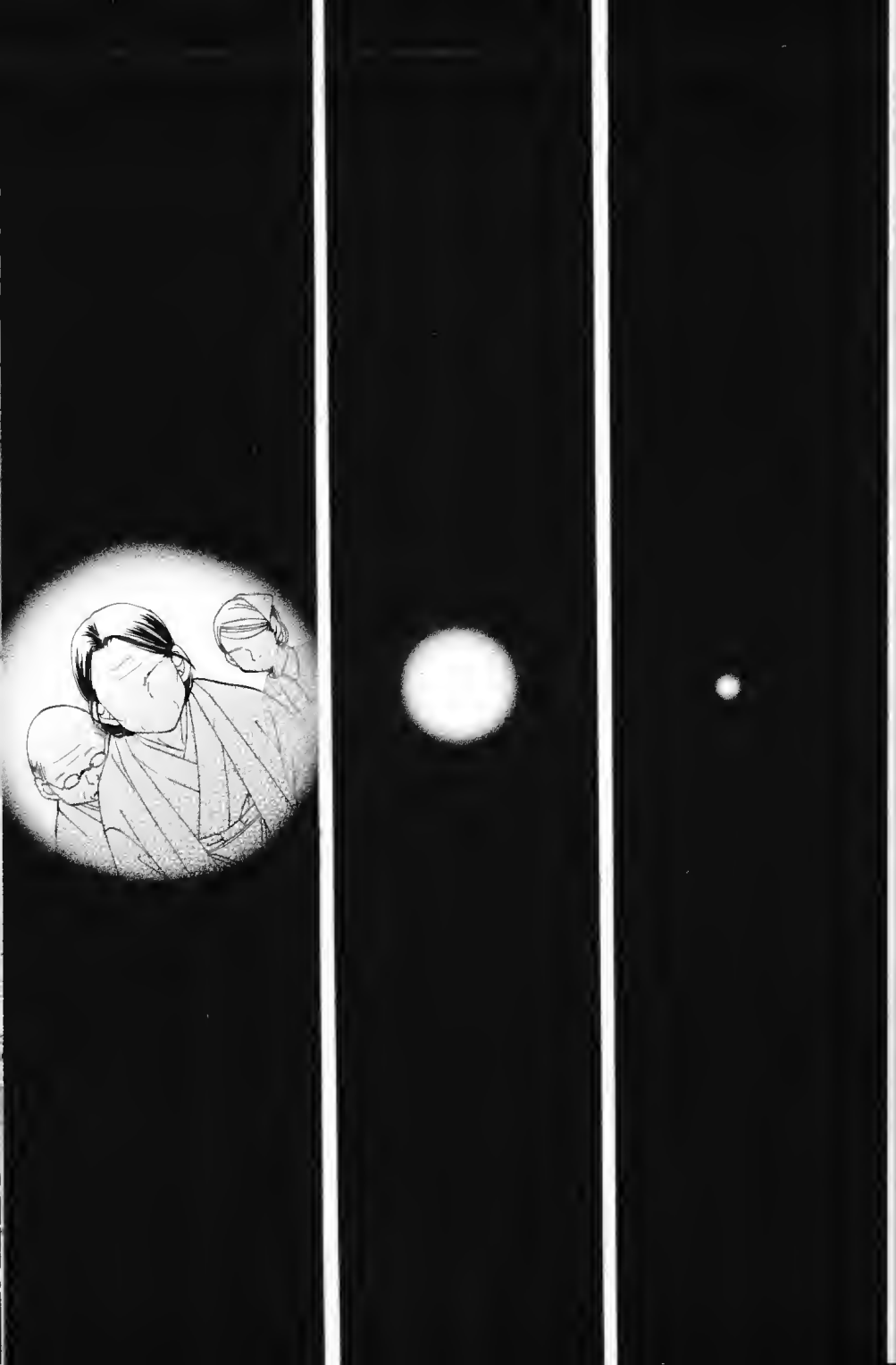
CLUTCH
THE ...
...BLEED-ING WON'T STOP!
I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE ...
...THE SAME PAIN...
...NO, MORE PAIN...

AND THEN...
...THE WORLD WENT DARK.
I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
!
NGH...
SLMP
PLEASE!
HELP!!



I'M IN DARKNESS.

IN PITCH-BLACK DARKNESS.



"NO, YOU STAY HOME."

I THINK ...

...THAT WAS HER WAY OF SAYING... SHE LOVED ME.

YOU STUPID, STUPID GIRL!!
I...
I'M NOT DEAD?
NO! YOU WOULD NEVER DIE SO EASILY!!
I TOLD YOU...
YOU DON'T TAKE AFTER MIWAKO.
LET ME MAKE IT CLEAR ONCE AND FOR ALL...
YOU'RE STRONG!

ANN!!
GRANDMA?
WHOMP
OW!
WHOMP
I WAS SO WORRIED!!
S-STOP THAT!!
FIRST MIWAKO, AND NOW YOU! YOU IDIOT!

YOU'RE NOT ALONE!
STRAIGHTEN UP!!

"YOU CAN'T..."
"...TELL YOUR MOM TO WORK HARDER ANYMORE."
WAAA
AAAH

PLIP
NGH...

BE HAPPY. PROMISE ME!
"NEVER GIVE UP."

"YOU CAN'T ASK SOMEONE IN THAT STATE TO WORK ANY HARDER."
"SHE WORKED AND WORKED—AND WORKED HERSELF TOO HARD. NOW SHE'S WORN HERSELF OUT..."
"YOU DON'T HAVE TO ALWAYS TRY YOUR HARDEST!!"
"YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF TOO HARD."
"THE PERSON I FELL IN LOVE WITH ISN'T WEAK."
"...AND NEVER GIVE UP."
"KEEP TRYING..."

I
WON'T
GIVE
UP.

ZSSSHSSHH
I ONLY—
...YOU WERE THE FIRST PERSON I THOUGHT OF.
ANY LATER, AND I HATE TO THINK WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
THANK YOU FOR FINDING HER.
I...
ZSSSHH
...DIDN'T WANT TO DRAG YOU INTO THIS, BUT...

SHE'LL BE FINE.
ALL THESE YEARS ...
...SHE'S CAUSED YOU SO MUCH TROUBLE.
BUT YOU'RE FREE NOW.
GO...
...AND BE HAPPY.

THANK YOU...
...FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR HER.

I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH.
I THINK ...
...EVERY-THING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT NOW.

YOU'RE THE REASON ...
...ANN SURVIVED UNTIL TODAY.

GRANDMA?
YES?
SQUEAK

I THOUGHT ...
...I HEARD DAIGO'S VOICE.
"ANN."

BOW
SQUEAK

IT'S IMPORTANT ...
...TO ANN THAT...
...YOU BE HAPPY.

TENDERNESS...

CONNECTION...

LOVE...

NO SINGLE WORD CAN DESCRIBE HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU.

I WONDER...

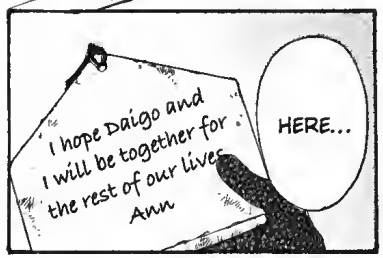
AFFECTION...

BECAUSE ...
...YOU ONLY GET ONE WISH.
I DON'T NEED THIS ONE ANYMORE.
I JUST WROTE A NEW ONE.

I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives.
Ann

"I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU."

KLAK
I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives.
Ann


I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives.
Ann
HERE...

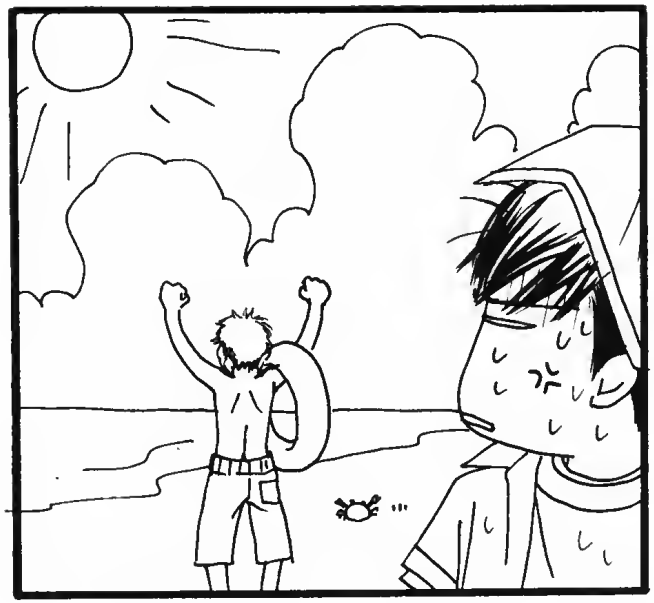
SHOULDN'T YOU WAIT UNTIL THE TONDO FESTIVAL?
NO.
COULD YOU BURN THIS?
CRACKLE CRACKLE

Hello.
YES?
IS THAT YOU, ANN?
YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP!
I almost didn't recognize you!

EXCUSE ME, SIR ...
KRAK! KRAK!

PRAY FOR HIM.
Please, please, please, let Daigo be happy. Ann
NOW THERE'S ONLY...
...ONE THING...
...I CAN DO FOR THE ONE I LOVE.
TOSS
I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives. Ann
KRAKL KRAKL
I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives. Ann
KRAKL
I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives. Ann

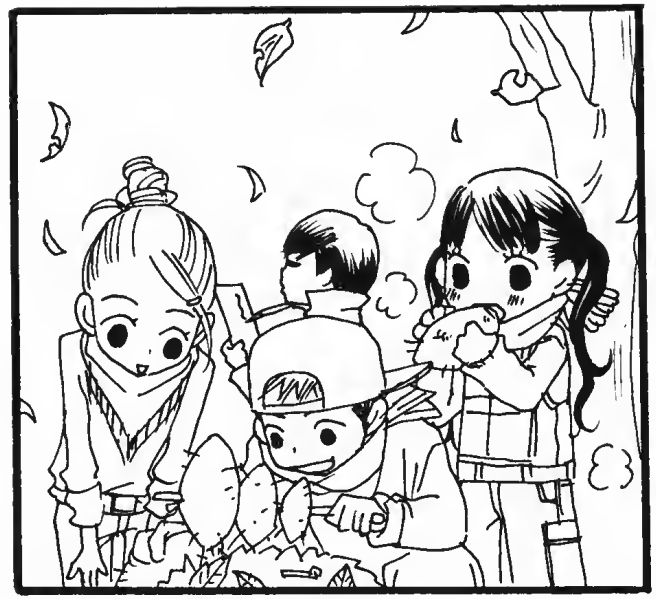
SAND CHRONICLES: EPILOGUE



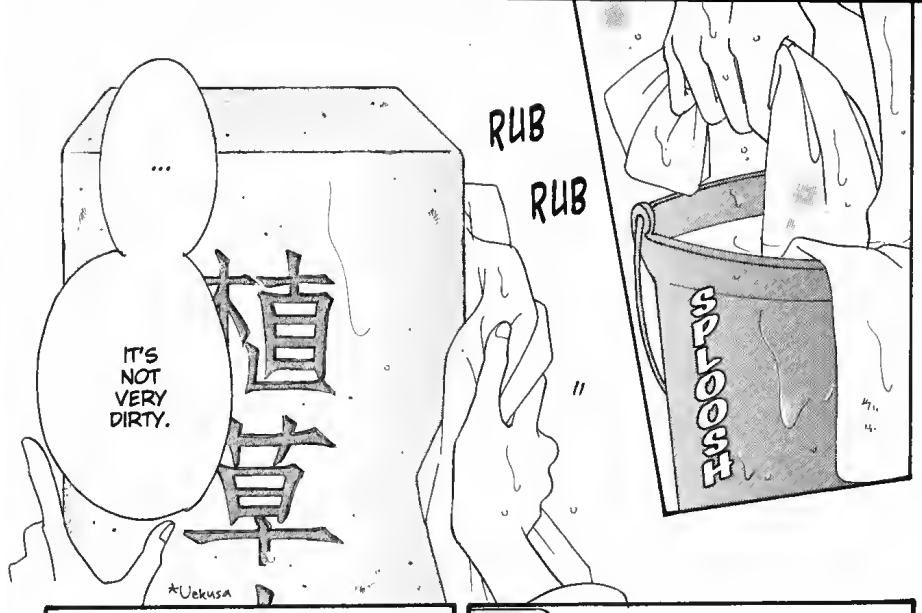
SAND CHRONICLES: EPILOGUE

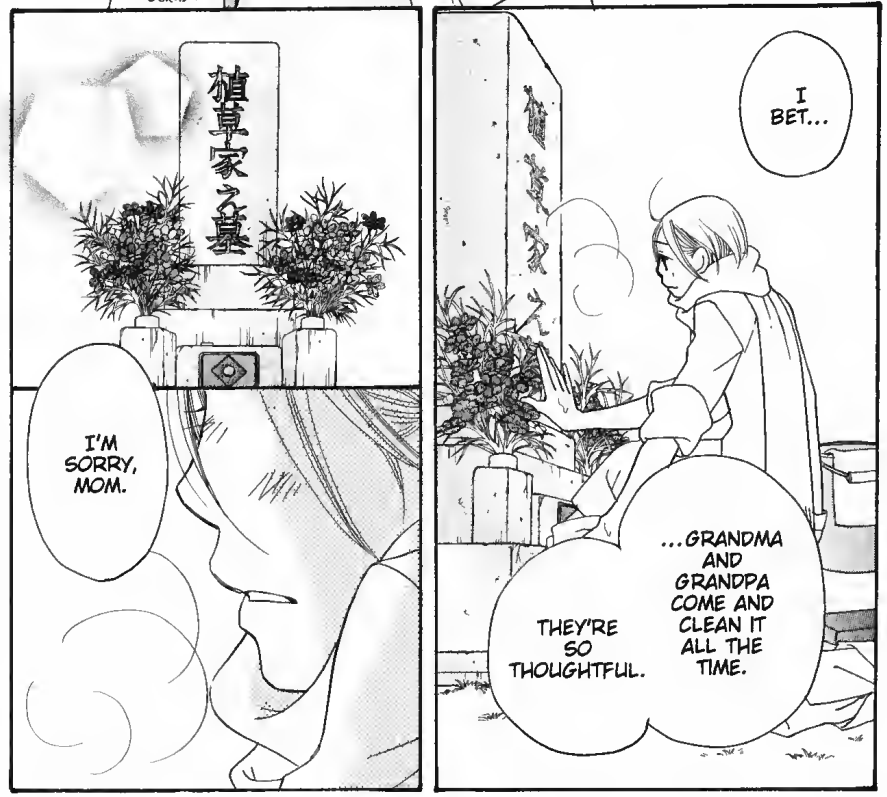
"DEAR SHIKA...
"HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?

PHEW
"HOW CAN I EVEN BEGIN TO TELL YOU...
"...EVERY-THING THAT'S BEEN GOING ON INSIDE OF ME?"

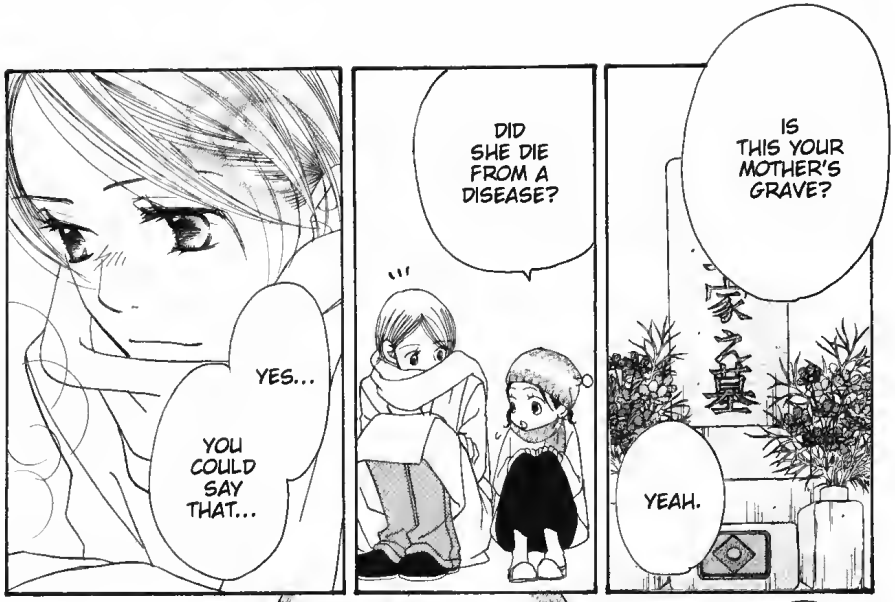


植草家之墓
I'M SORRY...
...I COULDN'T FACE YOU UNTIL NOW.
"I THINK...
"...I HATED HER ALL THESE YEARS.
"FOR LEAVING ME ALONE.
"AND MYSELF FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO FORGIVE HER."



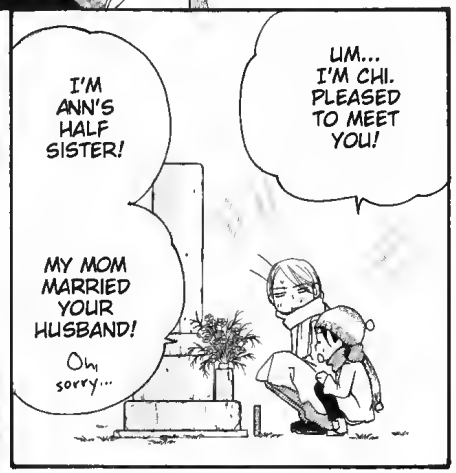


*Gravestone: Uekusa

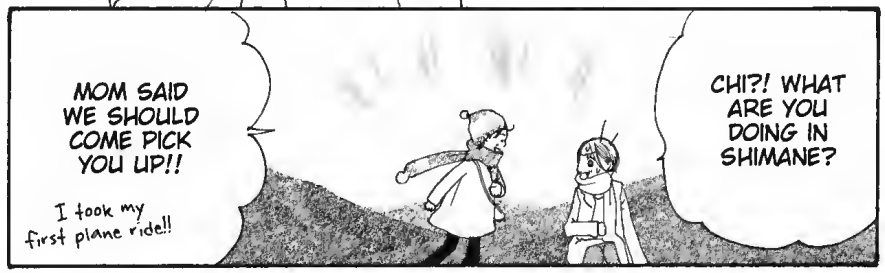

IS THIS YOUR MOTHER'S GRAVE?
家之墓
DID SHE DIE FROM A DISEASE?
YEAH.
YES...
YOU COULD SAY THAT...

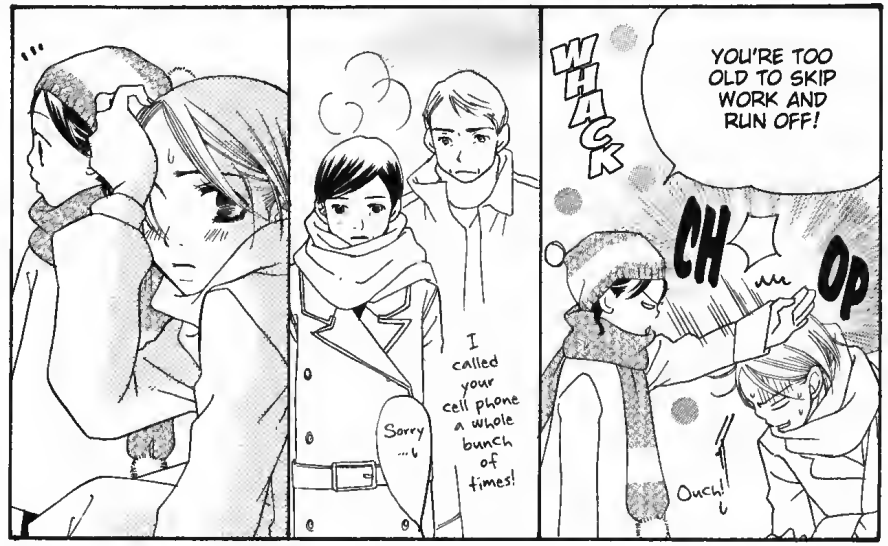
SHE WAS SO TIRED ...
...SHE GOT SICK.
OH.
How sad ...

...THANKS FOR GIVING US ANN!
AND, UH...

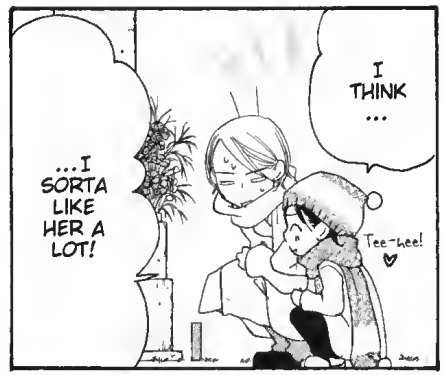

UM... I'M CHI. PLEASED TO MEET YOU!
I'M ANN'S HALF SISTER!
MY MOM MARRIED YOUR HUSBAND!
Oh, sorry...

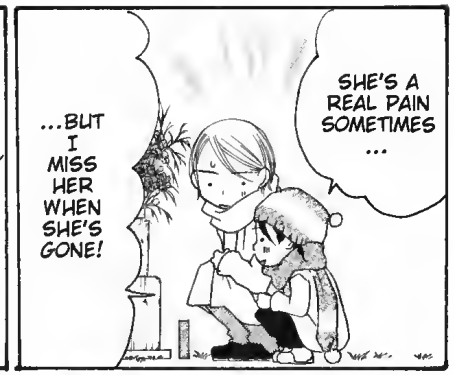
植草家之墓
ANN!!
Hi, Ann!!

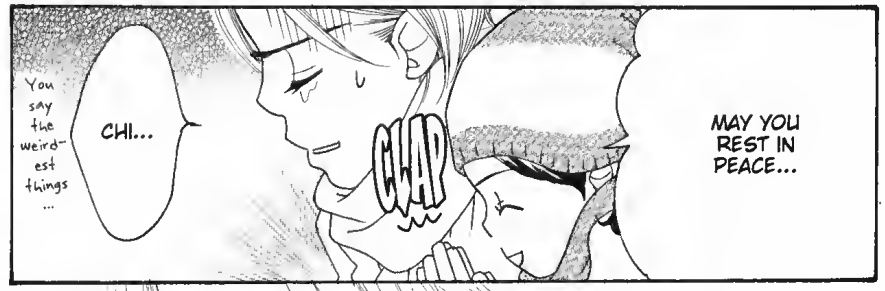

CHI?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN SHIMANE?
MOM SAID WE SHOULD COME PICK YOU UP!!
I took my first plane ride!!


YOU'RE TOO OLD TO SKIP WORK AND RUN OFF!
WHACK
CHOP
Ouch!
I called your cell phone a whole bunch of times!
Sorry ...

"...AND I LOVED HER VERY MUCH!
植草家之墓
"FINALLY ...
"I THINK I CAN FORGIVE HER."


...I SORTA LIKE HER A LOT!
I THINK ...
Tee-hee!

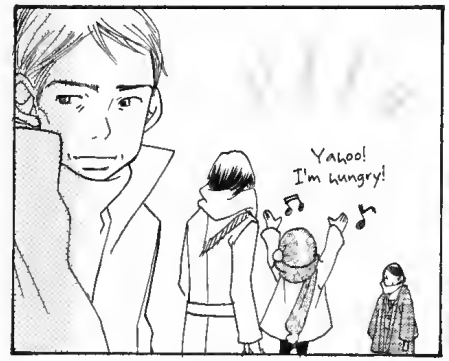

...BUT I MISS HER WHEN SHE'S GONE!
SHE'S A REAL PAIN SOMETIMES ...

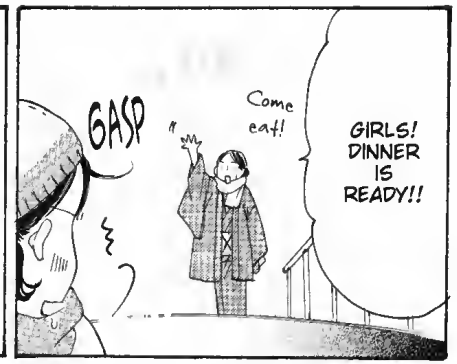

You say the weirdest things ...
CHI...
CHAP
MAY YOU REST IN PEACE...

WHAT WAS YOUR MOM LIKE?
Hm?

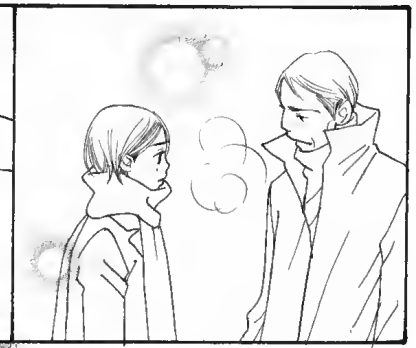
SHE WAS VERY KIND...

"AS USUAL...
"...SHIMANE GOT HEAPS...
"...OF SNOW THIS YEAR."


Yahoo! I'm hungry!


GASP
Come eat!
GIRLS! DINNER IS READY!!

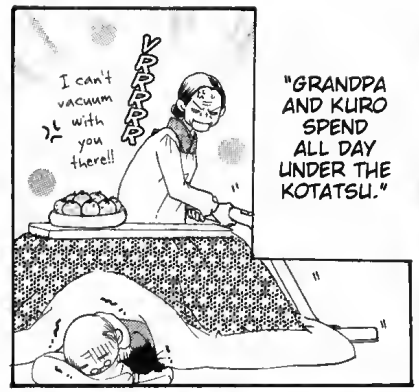
SMUSH
HUG

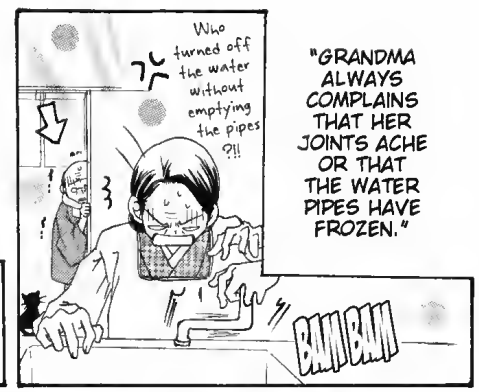


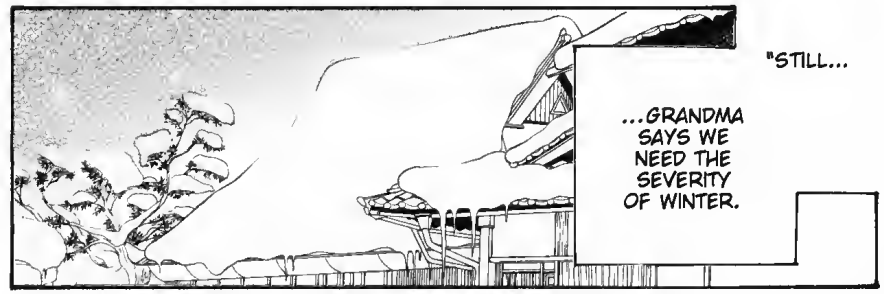
It snows a lot here.
...IT'S SNOWING.

LOOK...

"...WILL ALWAYS RETURN...
...TO THE WORLD...
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
TWEET
"...AND MELT THE SNOW."
End of term
I'M GOING TO HAND OUT YOUR REPORT CARDS NOW.
YIKES!
OKAYAMA


I can't vacuum with you there!!
KPAAAP
"GRANDPA AND KURO SPEND ALL DAY UNDER THE KOTATSU."

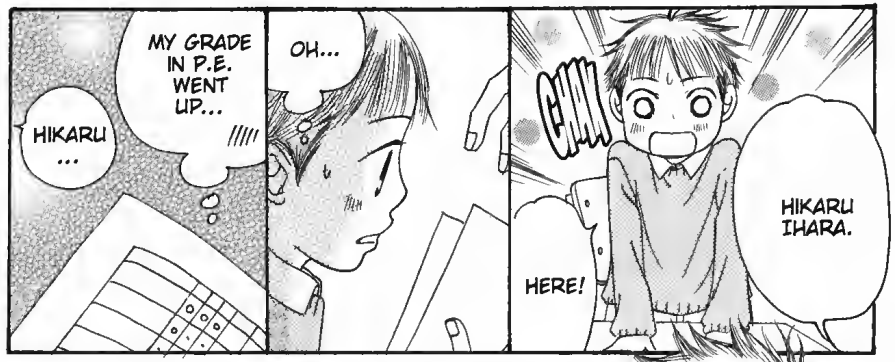

Who turned off the water without emptying the pipes?!!
BAM! BAM!
"GRANDMA ALWAYS COMPLAINS THAT HER JOINTS ACHE OR THAT THE WATER PIPES HAVE FROZEN."


"STILL...
...GRANDMA SAYS WE NEED THE SEVERITY OF WINTER.

DRIP
"SPRING ...
"BECAUSE WITHOUT IT, WE CAN'T APPRECIATE THE GENTLE TOUCH OF SPRING."

I'M GONNA TELL MS. YOSHI!
AN OLD GIRLFRIEND, DAIGO? SOMEONE YOU DUMPED?
Hey!
MS. YOSHIIIIIII!
BESIDES ...
...I WANT YOU TO HAVE IT SO YOU'LL REMEMBER ME.
Yes? What is it?
Daigo is cheating on you!
YOU SHOULD KEEP IT.
BUT ANN GAVE THAT TO YOU.
BUT I THINK SHE REALLY...
...WANTED YOU TO HAVE IT.

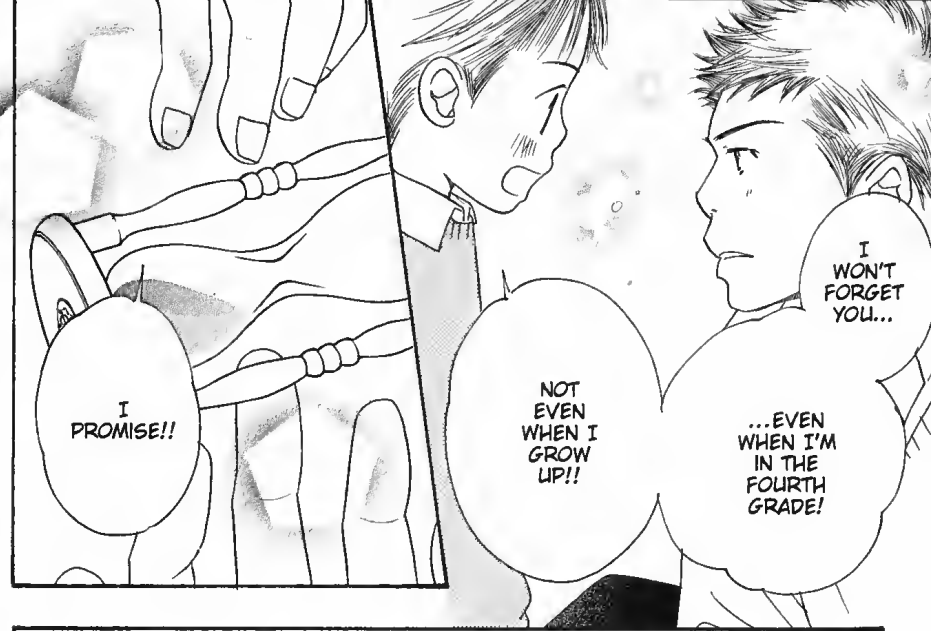
HERE!
COME UP WHEN I CALL YOUR NAME.
TAKUMI ADACHI.
I know how you feel.
I don't want mine!
AARGH!


HIKARU ...
MY GRADE IN P.E. WENT UP...
OH...
CHU
HERE!
HIKARU IHARA.

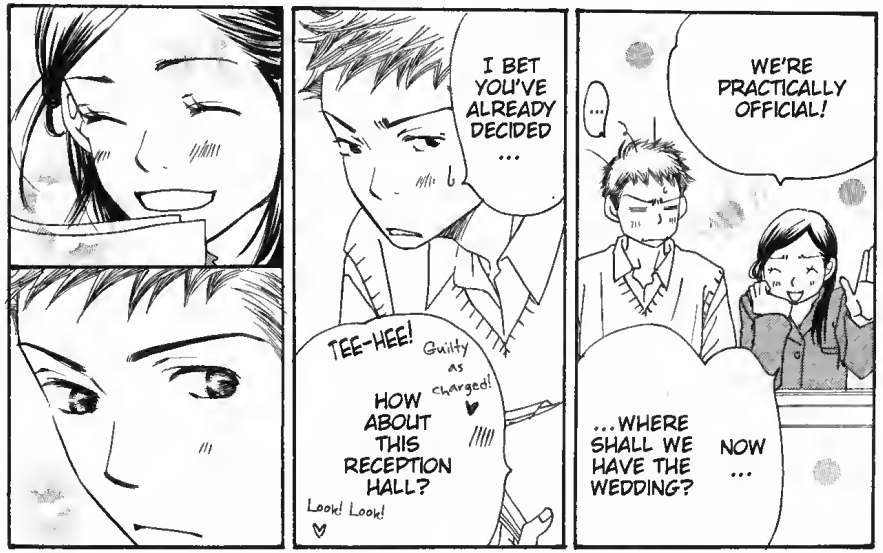
DAIGO?
I HAVE SOMETHING I WANNA GIVE YOU.
YES?
GOOD JOB...
...ON THE HORIZONTAL BAR.

HEY...
ARE YOU HAPPY?
OF COURSE!!

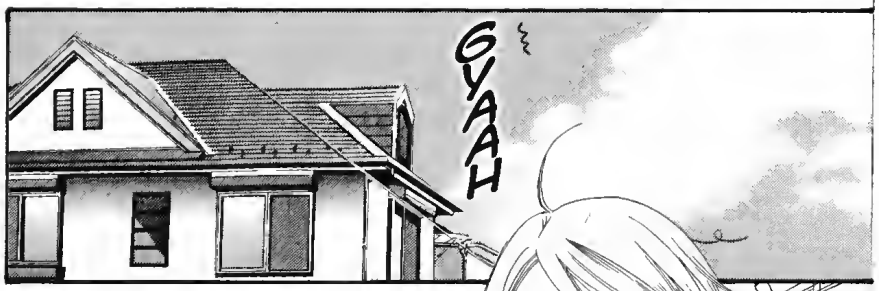
SSST
THE FAREWELL PARTY STARTS AT FIVE, RIGHT?
UH...
YEAH...
KITAMURA ...

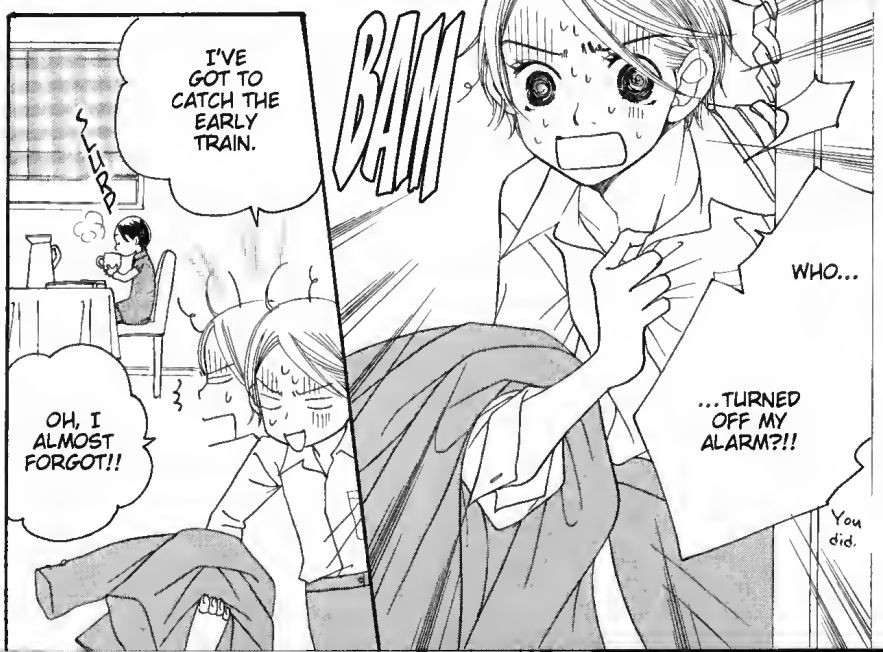

I PROMISE!!
NOT EVEN WHEN I GROW UP!!
I WON'T FORGET YOU...
...EVEN WHEN I'M IN THE FOURTH GRADE!

HOW CUTE!
Okay, good-bye!
Goodbye!
Bye!
Bye, Daigo!


I BET YOU'VE ALREADY DECIDED ...
TEE-HEE!
Guilty as charged!
HOW ABOUT THIS RECEPTION HALL?
Look! Look!
WE'RE PRACTICALLY OFFICIAL!
...
...WHERE SHALL WE HAVE THE WEDDING?
NOW ...

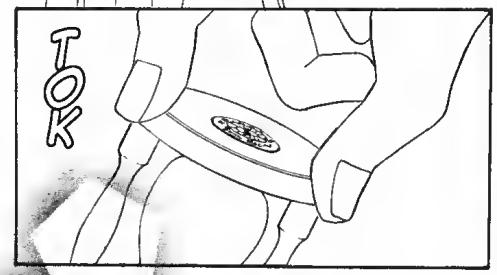
"I WISH I COULD SEE YOU.
"MAKE SURE YOU GET IN TOUCH WHEN YOU'RE BACK IN JAPAN. BYE!"
"HOW IS EVERYTHING IN CANADA?
Canada
Vancouver B.C. Canada
Shiho Tachishima

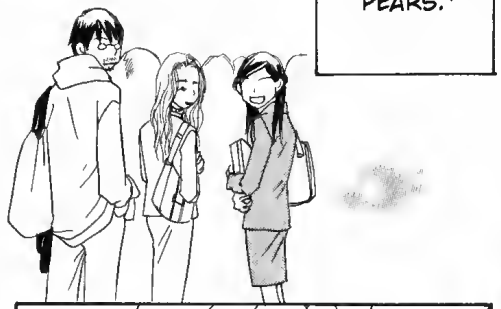

GYAAH


I'VE GOT TO CATCH THE EARLY TRAIN.
BAM
WHO...
...TURNED OFF MY ALARM?!!
You did.
OH, I ALMOST FORGOT!!

"YOU CAN'T TURN BACK TIME.

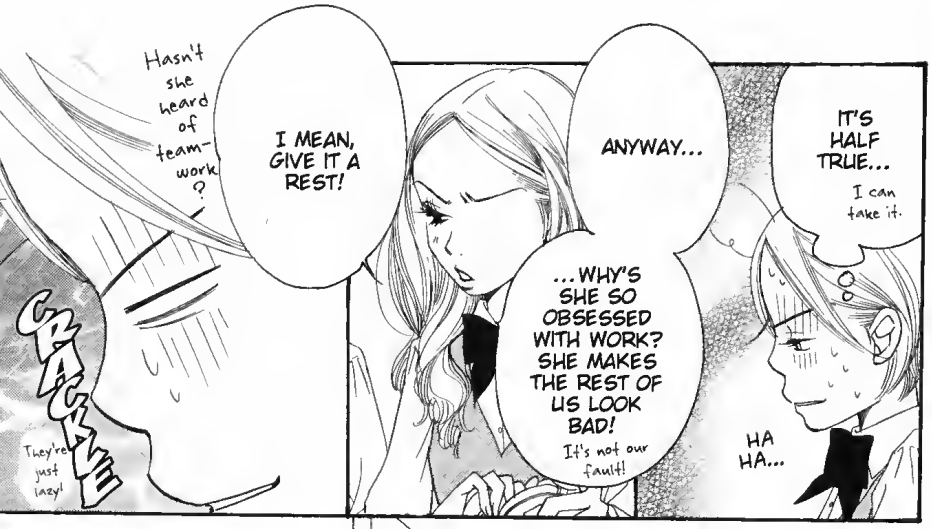
"MY PAST ...
"...IS WHAT'S HOLDING ME BACK."


TOK

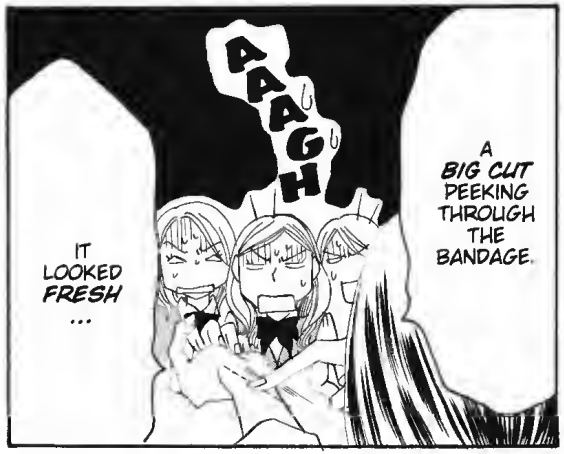

Hurry up, Daigo!
"BUT THE PAST NEVER DISAP-PEARS."

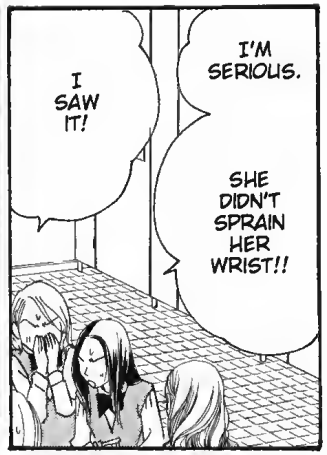
Let's see..
HERE ARE THE DOCUMENTS FOR THE CONFERENCE.
STARTS AT TEN O'CLOCK ...
I'LL BE READY!
Phew! That was close...
THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
SORRY TO CALL YOU IN SO EARLY.
CHAK
ANN, ABOUT YOUR WRIST...
TAP
TAP TAP TAP
Oh...
TOILET
What?
NO WAY!
FOR REAL?!
I appreciate your coming in to help me out, but...
Gah
IF YOU'RE GOING TO INSIST IT'S "SPRAINED," YOU BETTER ACT LIKE IT.
PEOPLE ARE TALKING.

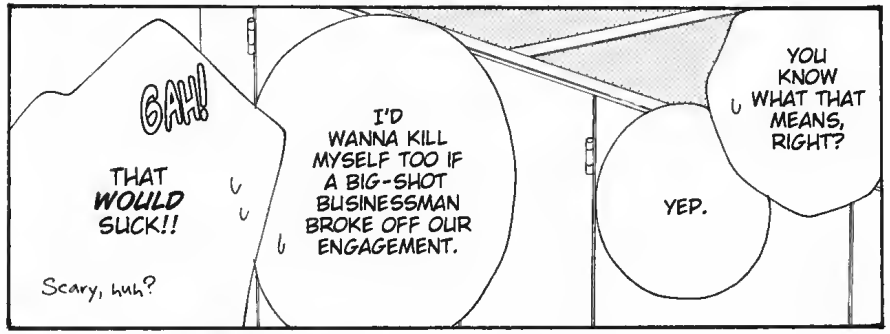
NGYAAAH
HUSTLE BUSTLE HUSTLE BUSTLE
HAVE A NICE DAY!!
Got it.
CHI, YOUR LUNCH IS ON THE DRESSER!!
BAM
YOU DID!!!
WHO SHUT OFF MY ALARM?!!
HONK
HUSTLE BUSTLE BUSTLE
GOOD MORNING.
GOOD MORNING ...
...MS. SAKAMOTO !!


Hasn't she heard of teamwork?
I MEAN, GIVE IT A REST!
ANYWAY...
...WHY'S SHE SO OBSESSED WITH WORK? SHE MAKES THE REST OF US LOOK BAD!
It's not our fault!
IT'S HALF TRUE...
I can take it.
HA HA...
CRACKLE
They're just lazy!

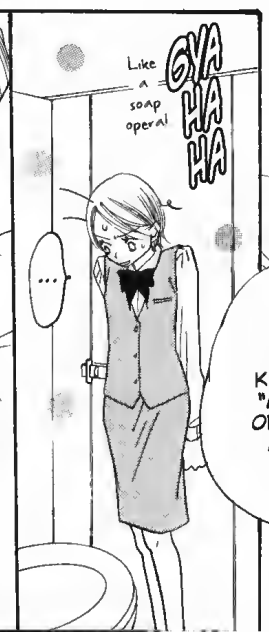
HUH?
I can't listen to this anymore!!
DON'T YOU KNOW WHEN TO SHUT UP?!
URASAWA?!
WH
FLUSH
PM
LISTEN UP, ALL OF YOU!!


AAAGH
A BIG CUT PEEKING THROUGH THE BANDAGE.
IT LOOKED FRESH...

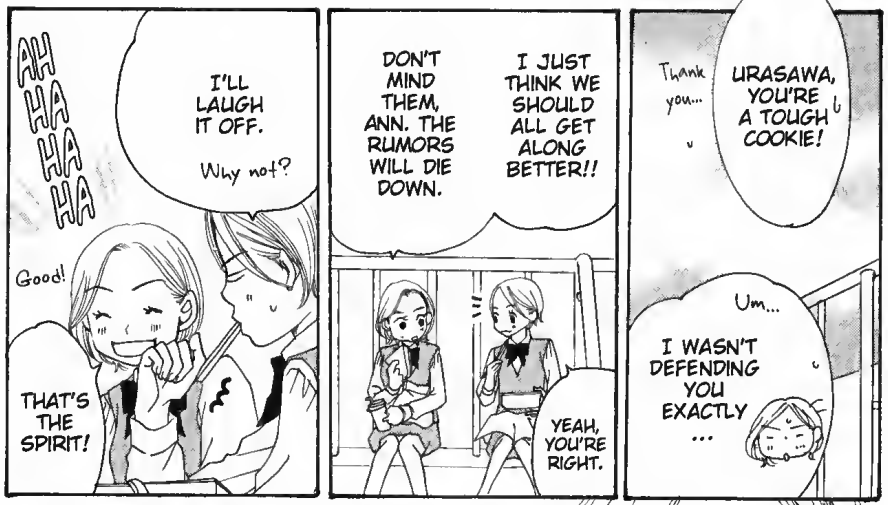

I SAW IT!
I'M SERIOUS.
SHE DIDN'T SPRAIN HER WRIST!!


GAH!
THAT WOULD SUCK!!
Scary, huh?
I'D WANNA KILL MYSELF TOO IF A BIG-SHOT BUSINESSMAN BROKE OFF OUR ENGAGEMENT.
YEP.
YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, RIGHT?

STUMBLE
OH, WELL...

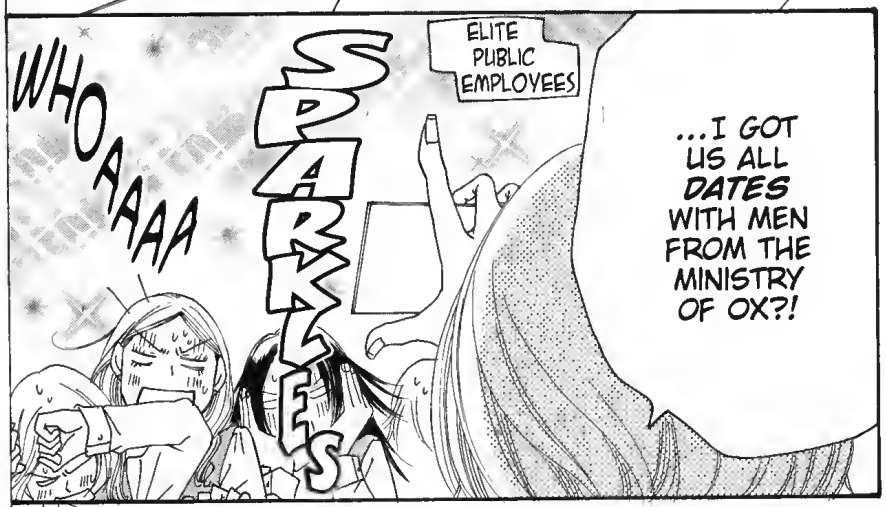

Like a soap opera!
GYA HA HA
...
YOU KNOW, LIKE, "MARRY ME OR I'LL KILL MYSELF!"

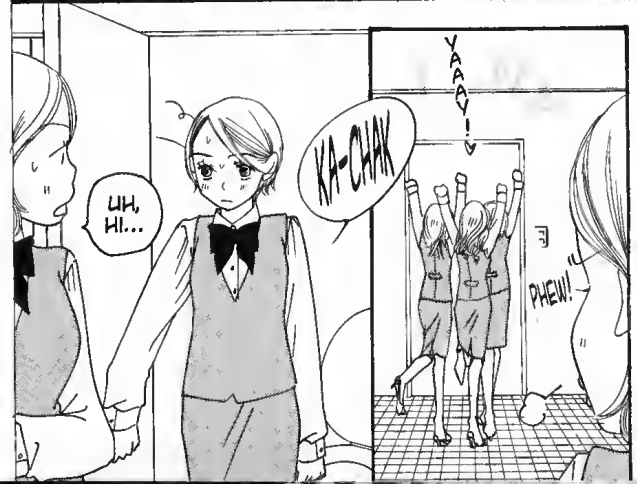
THE ONES WHO LOOK TOUGH ON THE OUTSIDE ARE ALWAYS LIKE THAT.


AHAHAHA
I'LL LAUGH IT OFF.
Why not?
Good!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT!
DON'T MIND THEM, ANN. THE RUMORS WILL DIE DOWN.
I JUST THINK WE SHOULD ALL GET ALONG BETTER!!
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.
Thank you...
URASAWA, YOU'RE A TOUGH COOKIE!
Um...
I WASN'T DEFENDING YOU EXACTLY ...

HUH?
YOU KNOW WHAT?
YOU'RE AVAILABLE, RIGHT?
YOU SHOULD COME WITH US TO MEET THOSE GUYS!
I CAN'T TALK TO GUYS FROM THE OX MINISTRY!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS !!
You've dated elite guys before!!

DA-
DUM
MINISTRY
PHEW
RUSTLE
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANNA TALK TO ME LIKE THAT WHEN...
WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
Back off!
CUT IT OUT ALREADY !!

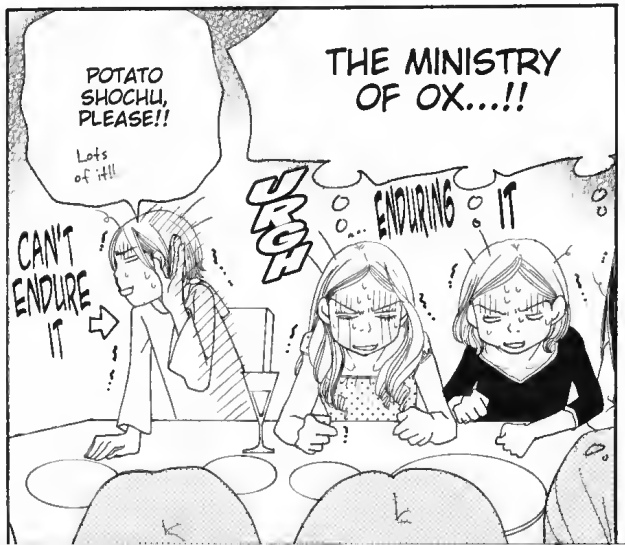

WHOAAAA
SPARKLES
ELITE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
...I GOT US ALL DATES WITH MEN FROM THE MINISTRY OF OX?!


UH, HI...
KA-CHAK
YAAAY!
PHEW!

You're forgiven.
I humbly apologize ...

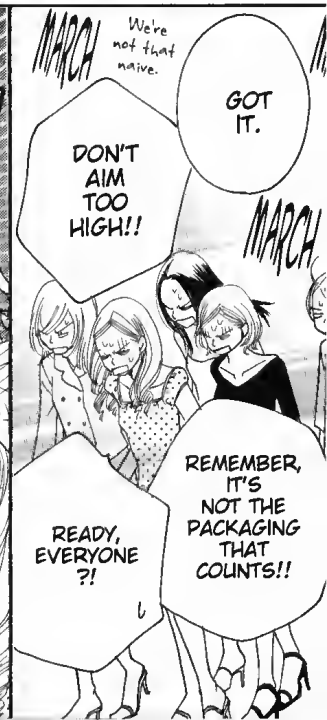
DOOM !!!
AVERAGE AGE: 45
D-DOOM
CRINGE

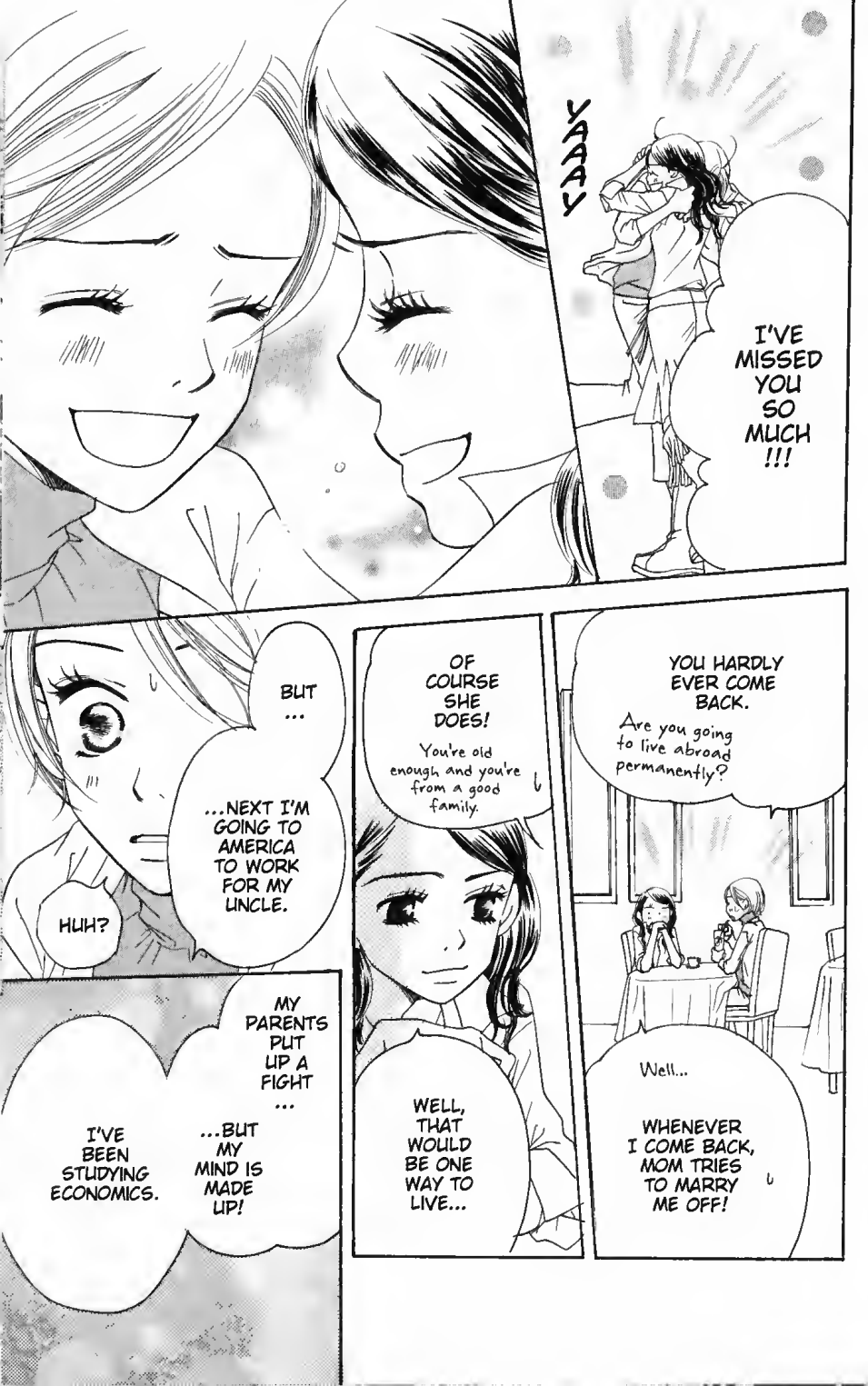
The warrior has returned.
I'M HOME ...
HI, ANN!
GUESS WHAT ?


POTATO SHOCHU, PLEASE!!
Lots of it!!
THE MINISTRY OF OX...!!
UGH
ENDURING IT
CAN'T ENDURE IT

Common knowledge?
GOT IT, EVERY-ONE?
DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH.
AARGH
PAIN CAUSED BY AN ELITE ...
...MUST BE HEALED BY ANOTHER ELITE.
IT'S COMMON KNOW-LEDGE!!

AGH
RE-PEAT AFTER ME !!
KEEP A WIDE STRIKE ZONE.
LESSON


MARCH
We're not that naive.
GOT IT.
DON'T AIM TOO HIGH!!
MARCH
READY, EVERYONE ?!
REMEMBER, IT'S NOT THE PACKAGING THAT COUNTS!!


YAAY
I'VE MISSED YOU SO MUCH !!!
BUT ...
...NEXT I'M GOING TO AMERICA TO WORK FOR MY UNCLE.
HUH?
I'VE BEEN STUDYING ECONOMICS.
...BUT MY MIND IS MADE UP!
MY PARENTS PUT UP A FIGHT ...
OF COURSE SHE DOES!
You're old enough and you're from a good family.
WELL, THAT WOULD BE ONE WAY TO LIVE...
YOU HARDLY EVER COME BACK.
Are you going to live abroad permanently?
Well...
WHENEVER I COME BACK, MOM TRIES TO MARRY ME OFF!

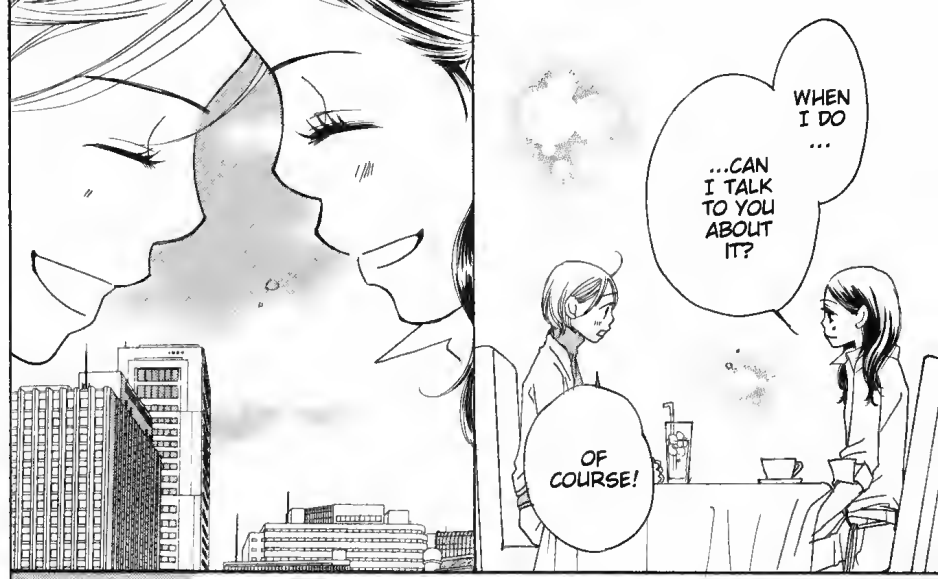
FWIP
A LETTER CAME FOR YOU!
IT'S FROM SHIKA!!
"DEAR ANN...
"HOW ARE THINGS?
Shika Tokishima
"I'M COMING BACK TO JAPAN SOON."
SHIKA!!
HI!

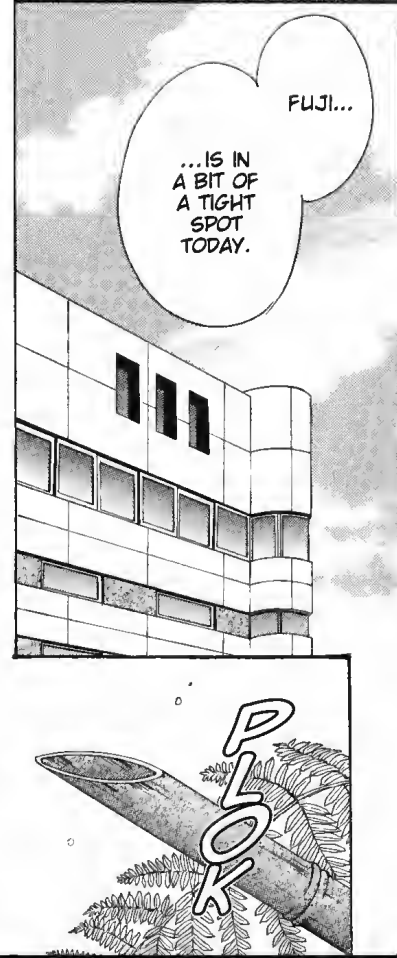
SHIKA ...
I WAS ALWAYS SO PASSIVE.
BEING A TSUKISHIMA WAS SMOTHERING ME.
YOU'VE CHANGED.
YOU'RE STRONGER.
FROM NOW ON I WANT TO BE AN ACTIVE...
...MEMBER OF THE TSUKISHIMA FAMILY.
WELL... I'LL PROBABLY START TO WORRY AGAIN SOMETIME.

SOME-DAY...
...I WANT TO RUN...
...THE FAMILY BUSINESS ...
...WITH FUJI.
ECO-
NO-
SAY WHAT ?!
Ha ha!
SURPRISED?
I am.
MICS ?!

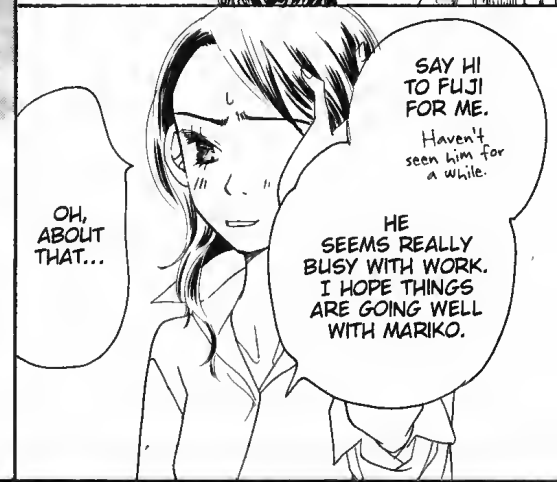
DO YOU ...
...REMEMBER WHAT YOU TOLD ME, ANN?
YOU SAID THE PROBLEM IS INSIDE YOURSELF.
YOU HAVE TO CHANGE YOURSELF.
I GOT AWAY AND LEFT JAPAN BEHIND.
WENT OVERSEAS TO START OVER...
ALL THOSE YEARS ...
...I ONLY WANTED TO RUN AWAY FROM THE TSUKISHIMA FAMILY.

...I'LL MARRY A WOMAN I LOVE.
BUT NOT MARIKO.
STUMP
SHE'S 19! AND TOO GOOD FOR YOU!
LOOK HOW YOUNG SHE IS!
WHEN THE TIME COMES ...
WHAT IS THIS?! I SNUCK OUT OF WORK BECAUSE YOU SAID IT WAS URGENT!!
WE'RE HERE TO MEET YOUR POTENTIAL FUTURE WIFE!!
This is a miai!!


WHEN I DO ...
...CAN I TALK TO YOU ABOUT IT?
OF COURSE!


FUJI...
...IS IN A BIT OF A TIGHT SPOT TODAY.
PLOK

Singles Party #2
19:00 hours
in Ginza
Rules:
1. Keep a wide strike zone.
2. Don't aim too high
3. Enjoy the free drinks.
I HAVE TO GO TO A SINGLES PARTY.
Again!!
Wow. Good luck.
I BETTER GET GOING. I HAVE PLANS WITH MY FAMILY.
OKAY.
Bye!


OH, ABOUT THAT...
SAY HI TO FUJI FOR ME.
Haven't seen him for a while.
HE SEEMS REALLY BUSY WITH WORK. I HOPE THINGS ARE GOING WELL WITH MARIKO.

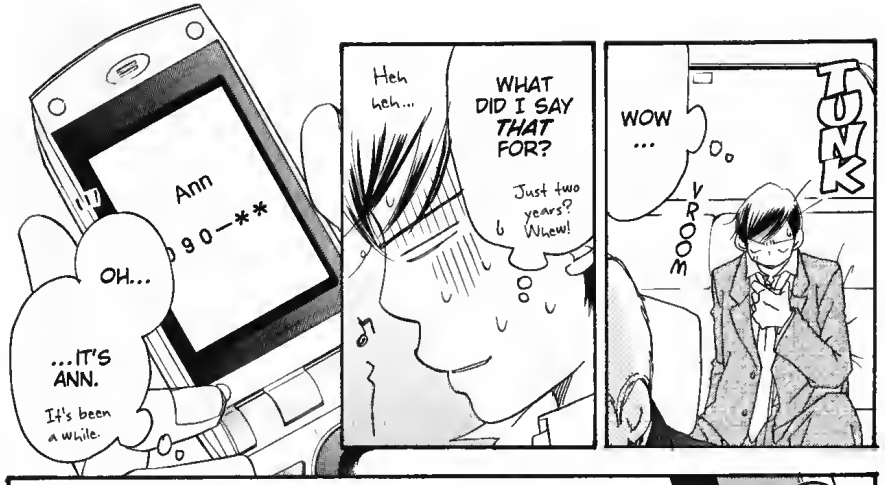
GIVE ME TIME.
THREE YEARS.
NO... TWO IS ENOUGH.
I'LL BECOME THE KIND OF MAN MY FATHER CAN'T COMPLAIN ABOUT.
I'M GOING BACK TO WORK.
WHO'D HE GET THAT STUBBORN STREAK FROM?
HONK

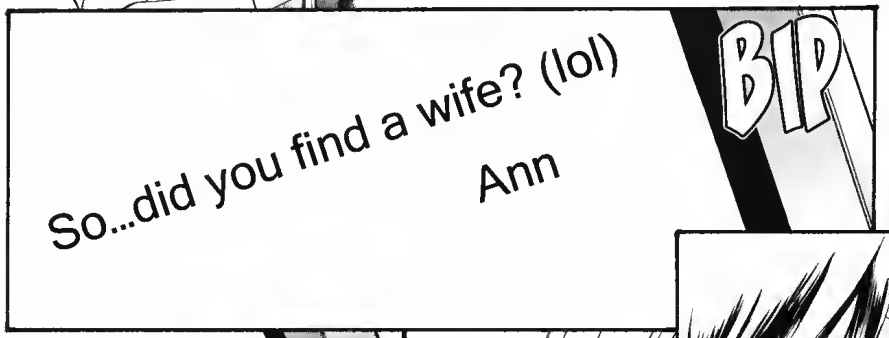
YOUR FATHER...
...WANTS YOU TO BE WITH...
...SOMEONE WHO SUITS YOU.
BECAUSE SHE'S YOUR COUSIN.
What would people think?
WHY NOT?

...YOUR FATHER...
...WILL HAVE A SAY IN EVERY-THING YOU DO.
YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?
THIS IS RIDICU-LOUS.
ONCE YOU TAKE OVER THE FAMILY BUSINESS...

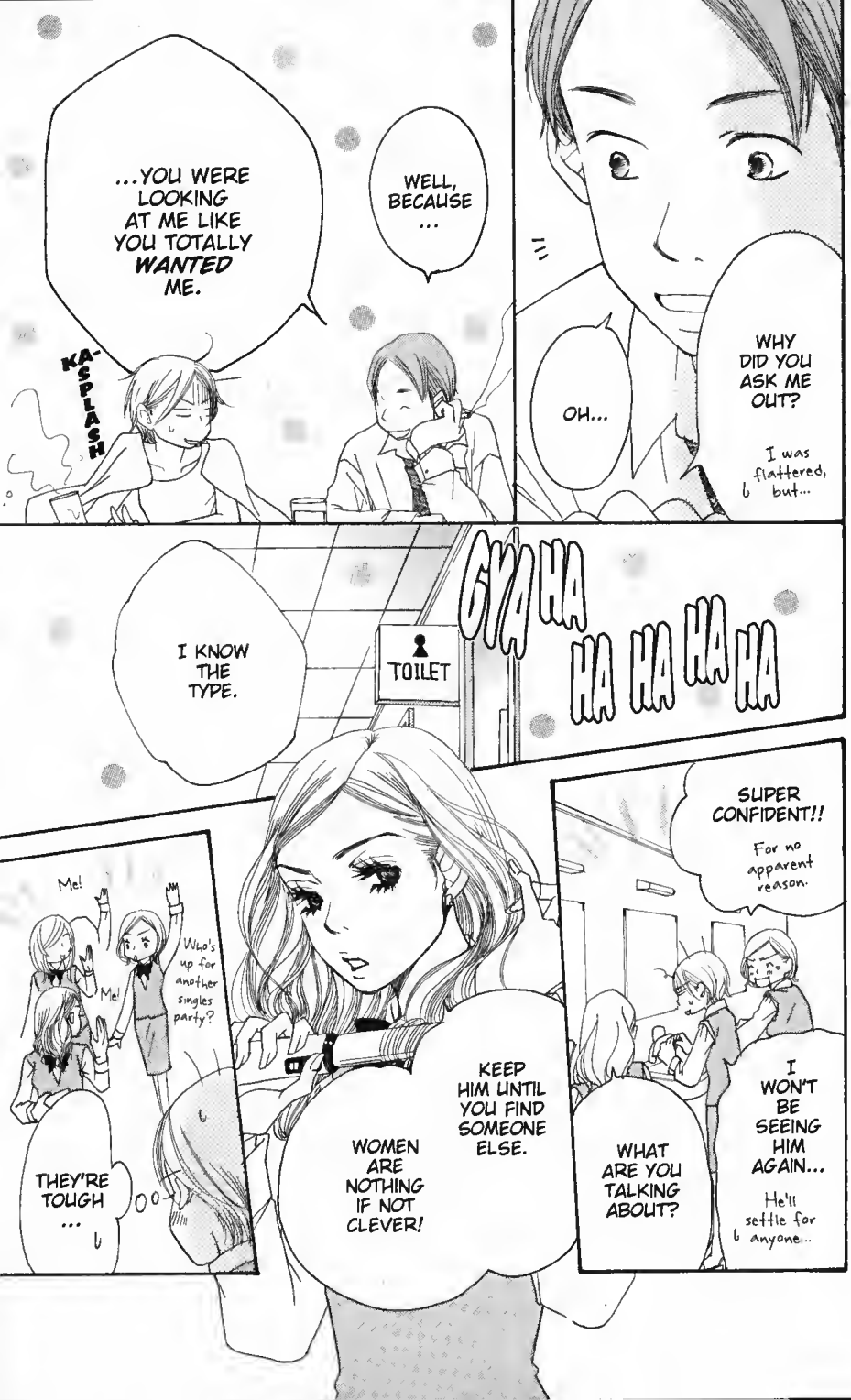
ALONE
IS THIS SEAT TAKEN?
Heh heh...
PLOP
POTATO SHOCHU
...I'VE GOT TIME.

"LET'S HAVE A DRINK TOGETHER SOMETIME."
Haruhide Sugiyama
HARU-HIDE, RIGHT?
...BUT HE SEEMS NICE ENOUGH.
WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO TALK...
I'm sure he's nice!
I FEEL LIKE ...
HONK
SMILE
OH...


Ann
090-**
OH...
...IT'S ANN.
It's been a while.
Heh heh...
WHAT DID I SAY THAT FOR?
Just two years? Whew!
WOW ...
VROOM
TUNK

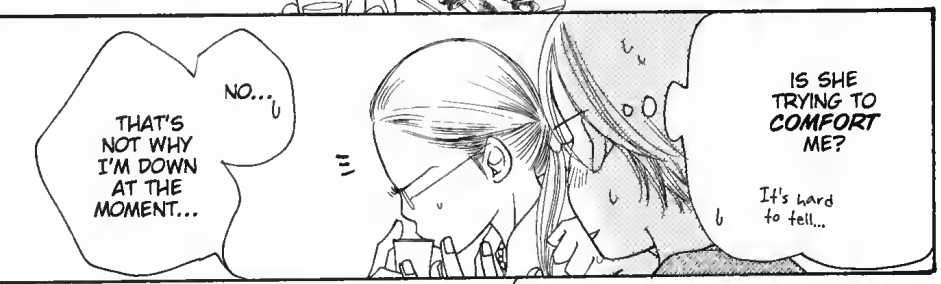

So..did you find a wife? (lol)
Ann
BIP

What about your singles party? (Shika told me.) Got time for texting?
Fuji
BIP
UH...
Shika !!
Shika...

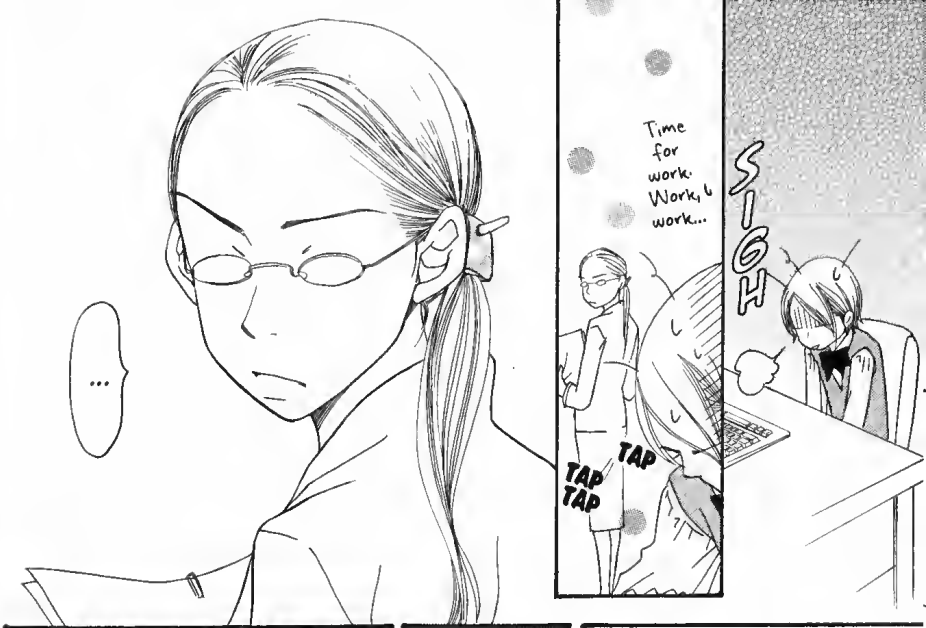

...YOU WERE LOOKING AT ME LIKE YOU TOTALLY WANTED ME.
KA-SPLASH
WELL, BECAUSE ...
OH...
WHY DID YOU ASK ME OUT?
I was flattered, but...
I KNOW THE TYPE.
TOILET
GYA HA HA HA HA HA
SUPER CONFIDENT!!
For no apparent reason.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I WON'T BE SEEING HIM AGAIN...
He'll settle for anyone...
WOMEN ARE NOTHING IF NOT CLEVER!
KEEP HIM UNTIL YOU FIND SOMEONE ELSE.
Me!
Me!
Who's up for another singles party?
THEY'RE TOUGH ...

...A NORMAL OFFICE GIRL NOW!
HONK
SO THEN...
With lots of enemies ...
ME? I'M A STRAIGHT-SHOOTER.
OH...
THEY'RE SO UNSURE OF THEMSELVES. THEY'LL BACK DOWN IN A SECOND.
...I TOLD THEM ALL OFF...
...AND THEY STARTED BOWING LIKE CRAZY.
WHAT PATHETIC, SMALL PEOPLE...
...
UH-OH...
UM...
I mean, comedians these days just aren't funny anymore..
THIS IS BORING.

...CONSIDERING HOW CLOSE YOU WERE TO GETTING MARRIED, YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT BE WORSE, BUT...
WELL ...
I WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE.

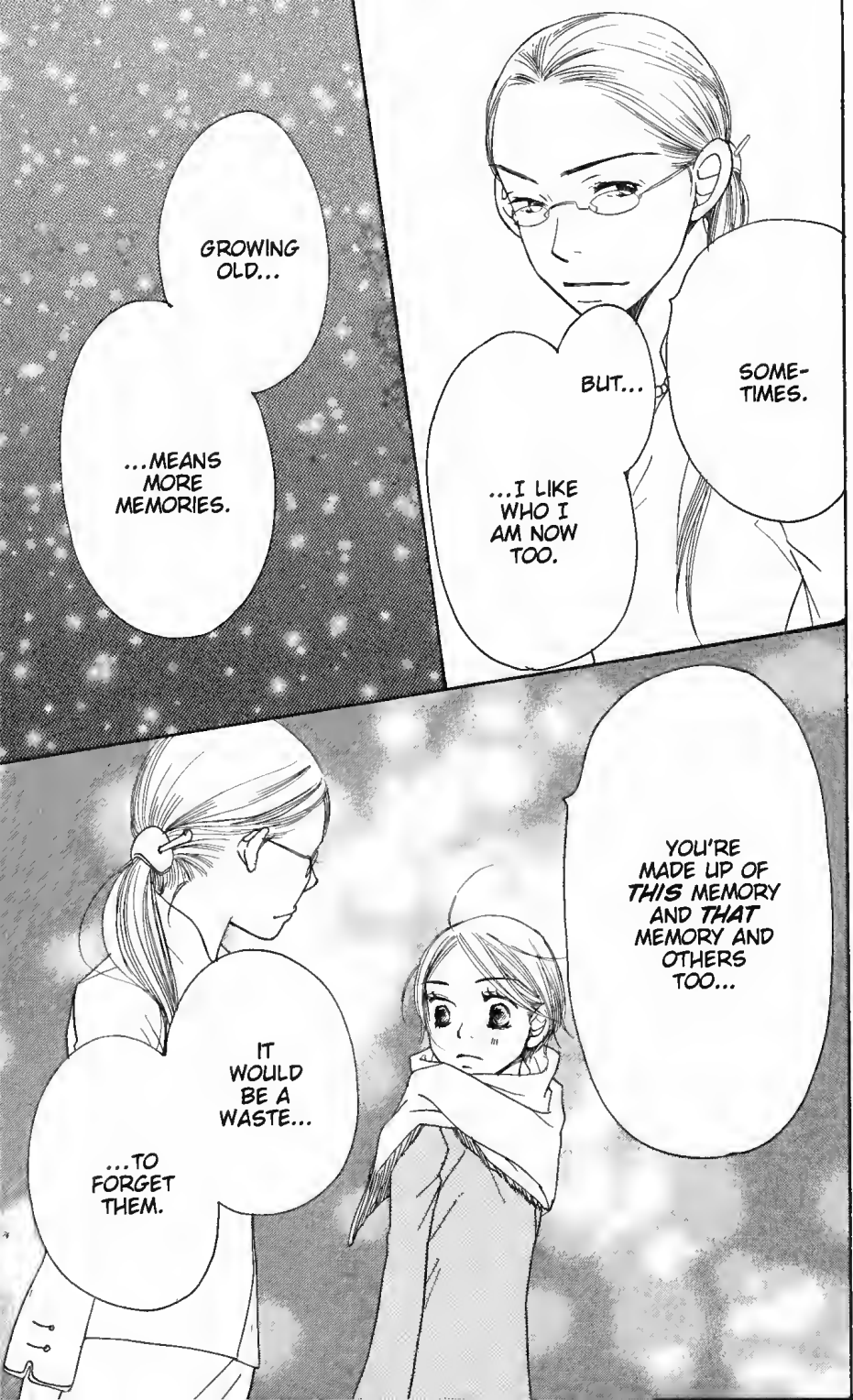

NO...
THAT'S NOT WHY I'M DOWN AT THE MOMENT...
IS SHE TRYING TO COMFORT ME?
It's hard to tell...

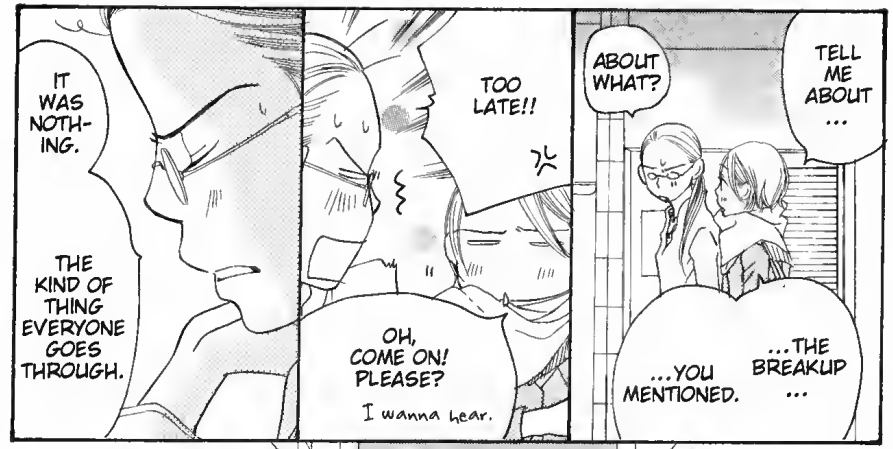
Tch!
MUTTER MUTTER
I SAY!
Girls these days!!
YOU CERTAINLY BOUNCE BACK EASILY!
—named Sugiyama and he—
I MET THIS GUY...
UH... SORRY!

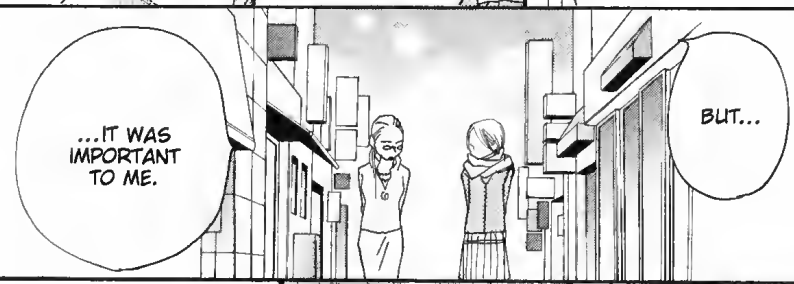

...
Time for work. Work, work...
TAP TAP
TAP
SIGH

ONCE...
...LONG AGO...
...I WENT THROUGH A ROUGH BREAKUP MYSELF.

UH...
YES?
MS. MINASE.
HOW ABOUT A DRINK AFTER WORK?
OKAY.


GROWING OLD...
...MEANS MORE MEMORIES.
SOME-TIMES.
BUT...
...I LIKE WHO I AM NOW TOO.
YOU'RE MADE UP OF *THIS* MEMORY AND *THAT* MEMORY AND OTHERS TOO...
IT WOULD BE A WASTE...
...TO FORGET THEM.


IT WAS NOTH-ING.
THE KIND OF THING EVERYONE GOES THROUGH.
TOO LATE!!
OH, COME ON! PLEASE?
I wanna hear.
ABOUT WHAT?
...YOU MENTIONED.
TELL ME ABOUT ...
...THE BREAKUP ...


...IT WAS IMPORTANT TO ME.
BUT...

...YOU COULD GO BACK TO THAT TIME?
DO YOU WISH ...
...I ACTED SO NAIVE AND FOOLISH.
THAT WAS THE FIRST AND LAST TIME ...

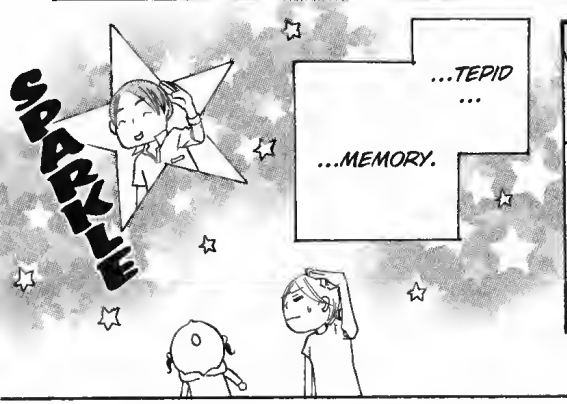
AHH!
I CARED ABOUT SOME-ONE.
HE CARED ABOUT ME.
I AM THIS MEMORY AND THAT MEMORY AND OTHER MEMORIES TOO.
I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives.
Ann

I CRIED.
I GOT MAD.
I LAUGHED.
You're creeping me out!
I love you, Chief!

SORTING PHOTOS.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, SIS?
GYA HA HA HA
...!
WHOA! WHAT'S THIS ONE?!
There's a lot of 'em!
THEY'VE BEEN SITTING IN A DRAWER FOREVER.
...
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?
I thought you were always an old maid...
SO YOU WERE A KID ONCE TOO...
What ?!

...I SEE...
...HOW PRECIOUS MY LIFE IS.
WHEN I THINK ABOUT THAT...

NO...
A BOY-FRIEND?
LOOKS LIKE IT.
DID HE DUMP YOU?
Sorry. Found someone else. Break up with me. Sugiyama


SPARKLE
...TEPID...
...MEMORY.

DELETE
BIP
THAT'S ONE MORE...

A TRIP?
LET'S GO...
TO SHIMANE! TO HEAL MY BROKEN HEART!!
...ON A TRIP TOGETHER!

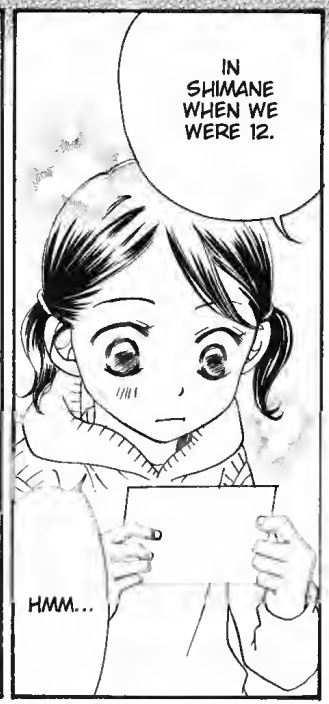
...unpopular!
Sis, you sure are...
Poor thing...
I'VE GOT AN IDEA, CHI!

...SHIKA...
...AND FUJI.
THAT'S DAIGO...

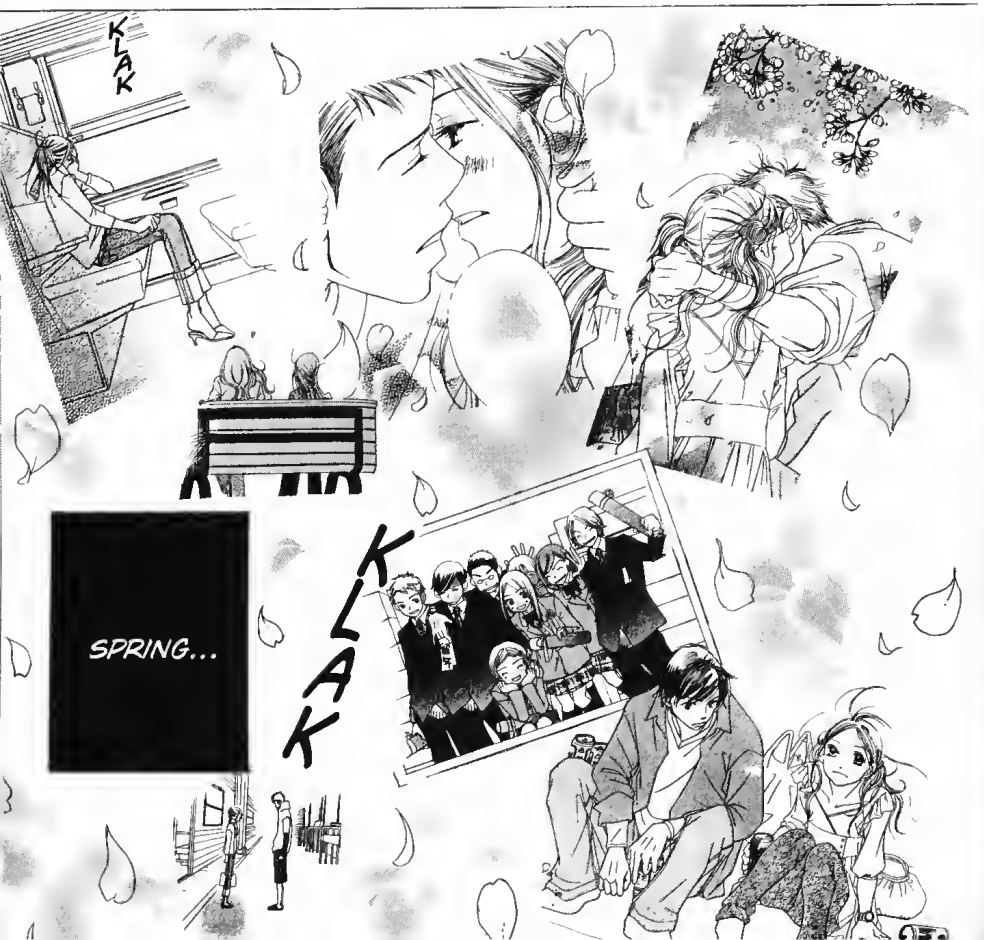
UH-OH...
...IT'S FROM SUGI-YAMA.
Sugiyama

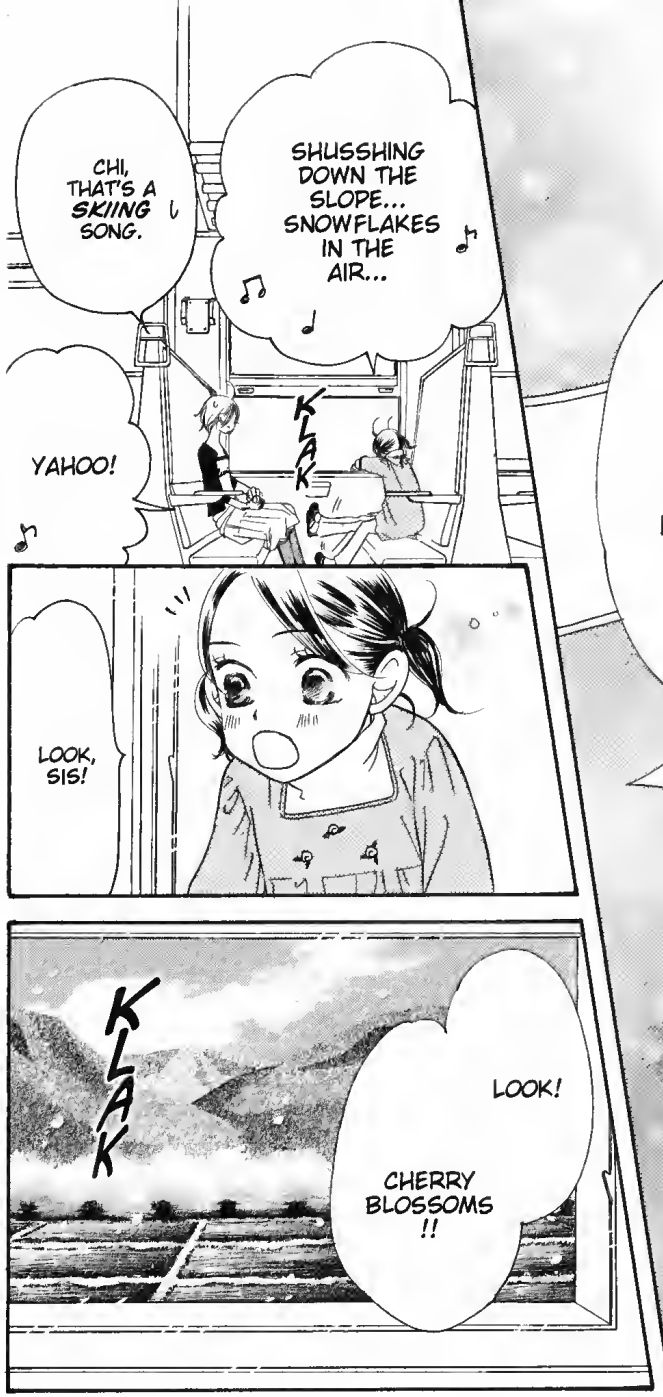
What's he want?
BIP
HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM SINCE WE WENT OUT THAT TIME.

I'd go for Fuji.


IN SHIMANE WHEN WE WERE 12.
HMM...

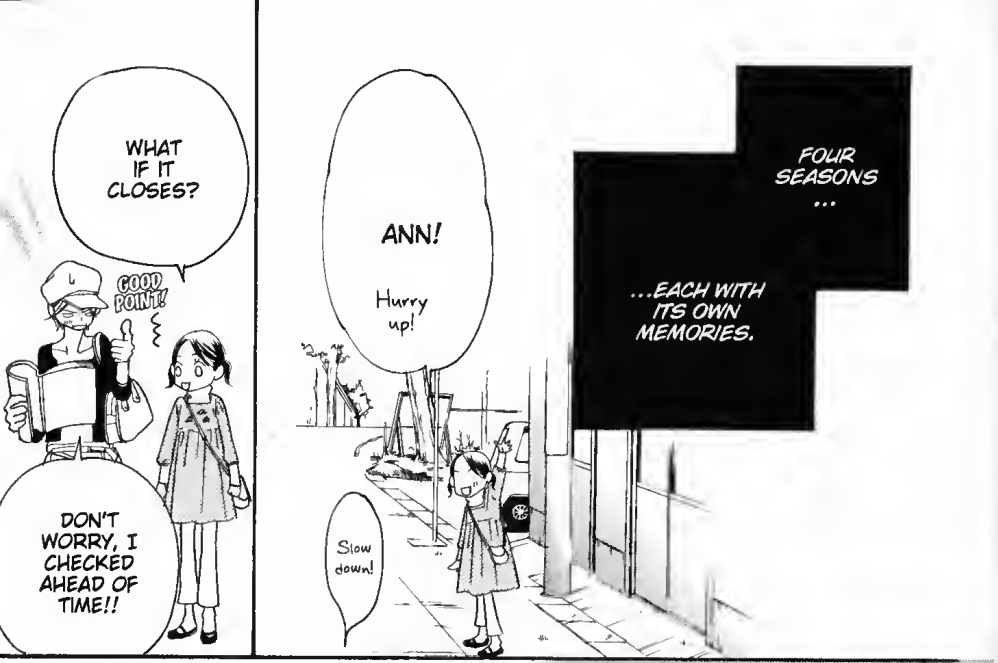
"THE FOOTHILLS TURN A PALE PINK..."
"CHERRY BLOSSOMS ?"
They're pretty!
KLAK
ARE THEY SOMEI YOSHINO TREES?
NO. I THINK THEY'RE YAMA-ZAKURA.

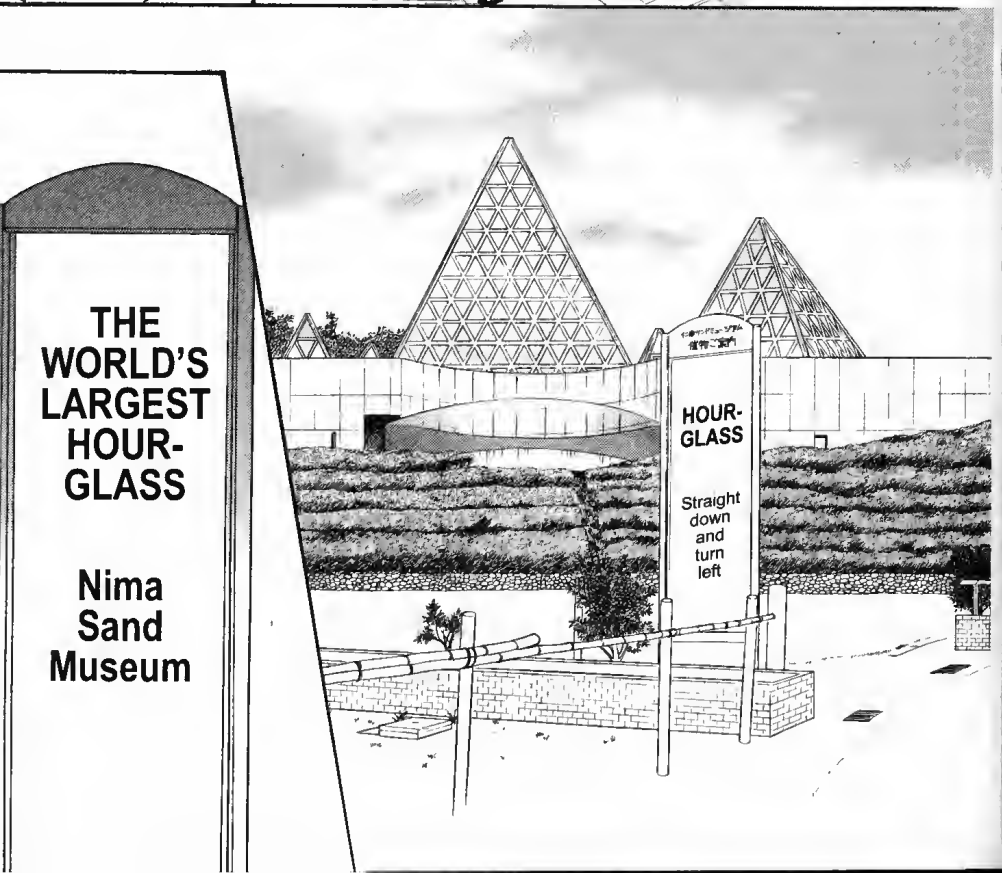

KLAK
KLAK
SPRING...


CHI, THAT'S A SKIING SONG.
SHUSSHING DOWN THE SLOPE... SNOWFLAKES IN THE AIR...
YAHOO!
KLAK
LOOK, SIS!
KLAK
LOOK! CHERRY BLOSSOMS !!

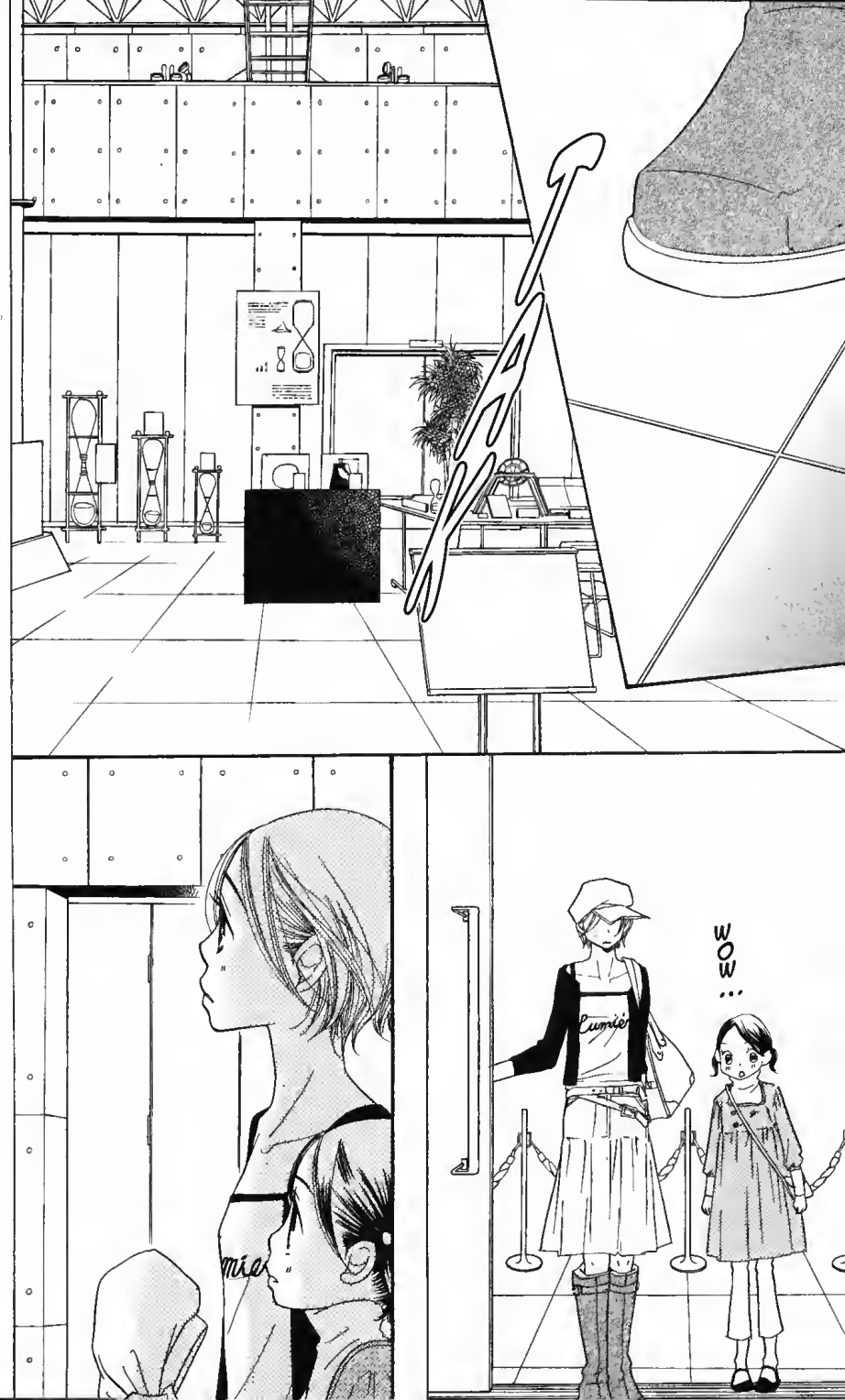
LET'S GO TO NIMA...
...TO SEE THE ONE-YEAR HOURGLASS !!

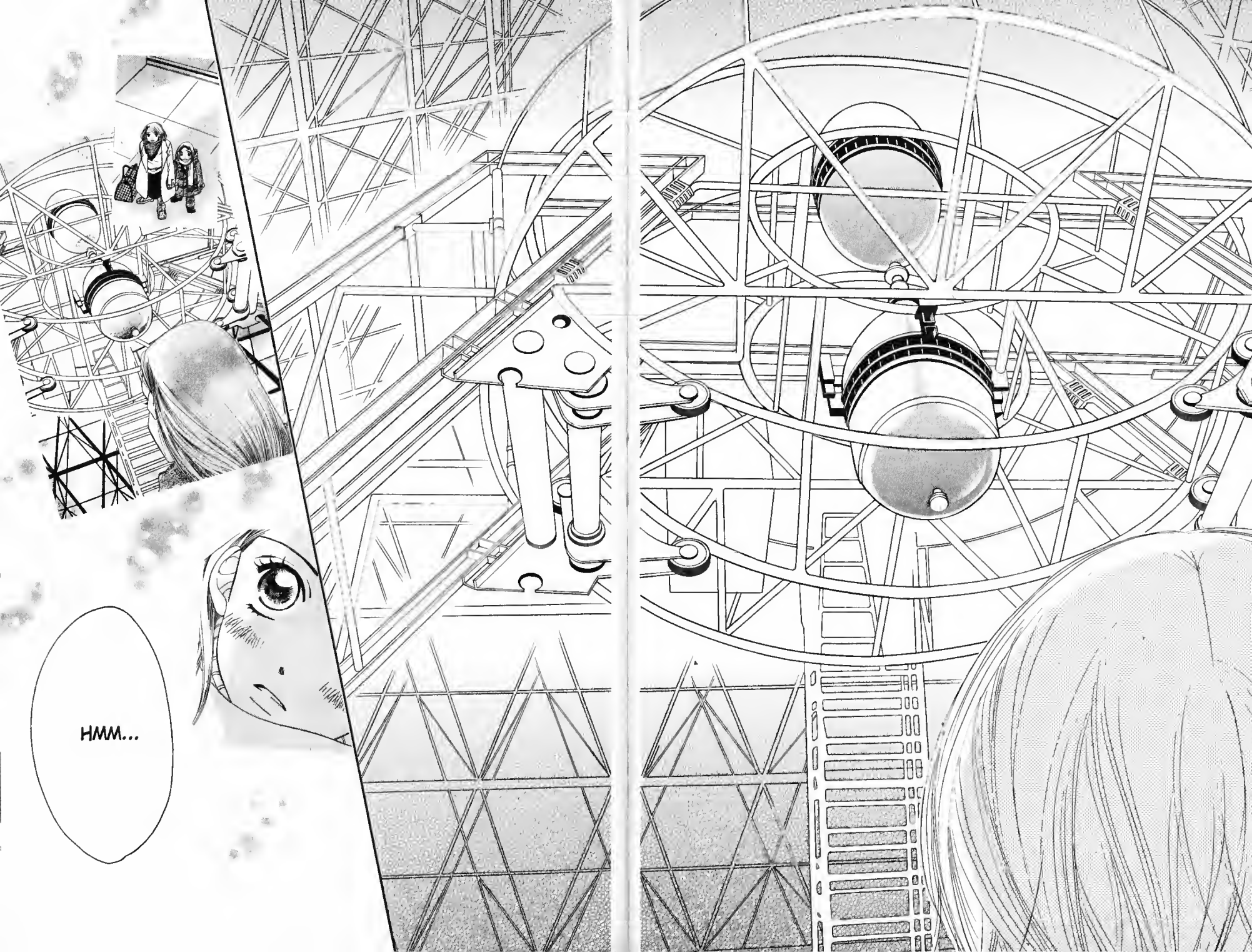
KLAK


WHAT IF IT CLOSES?
GOOD POINT!
DON'T WORRY, I CHECKED AHEAD OF TIME!!
ANN!
Hurry up!
Slow down!
FOUR SEASONS ...
...EACH WITH ITS OWN MEMORIES.


THE WORLD'S LARGEST HOUR-GLASS
Nima Sand Museum
HOUR-GLASS
Straight down and turn left

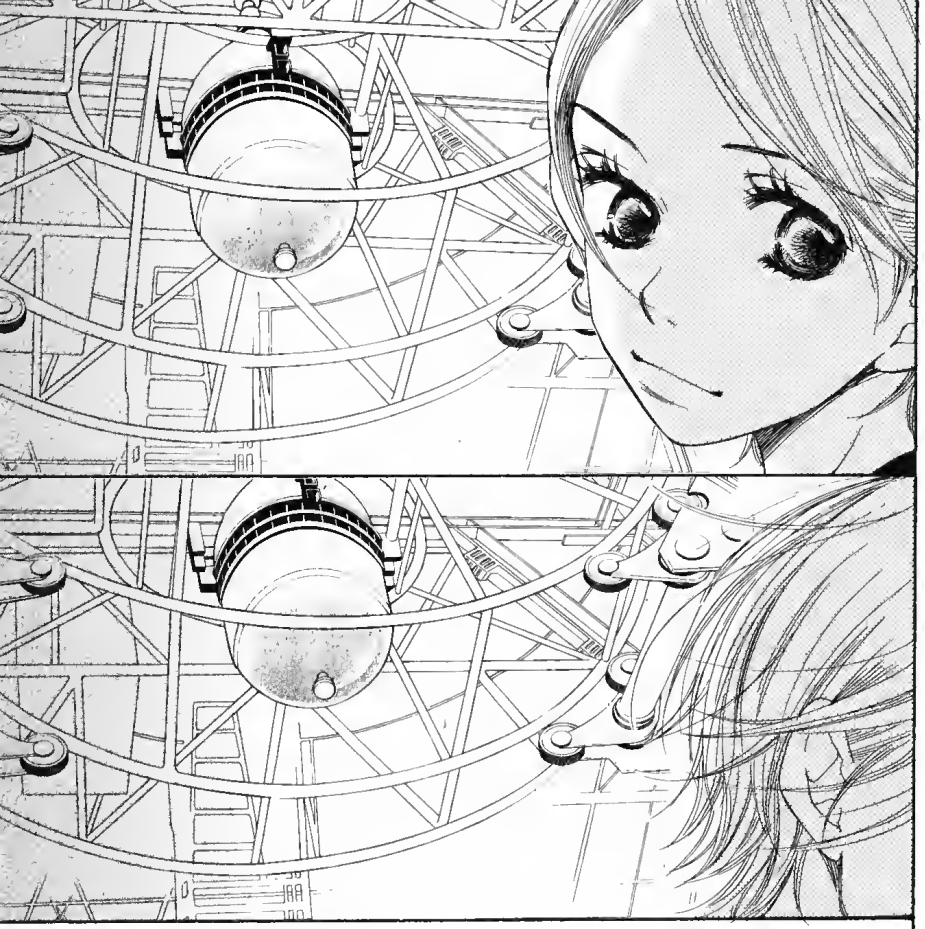
SUMMER ...
GA-CHUNK
...FALL...
... AND WINTER.
GACHI!
KOOL
KOOL
KOOL

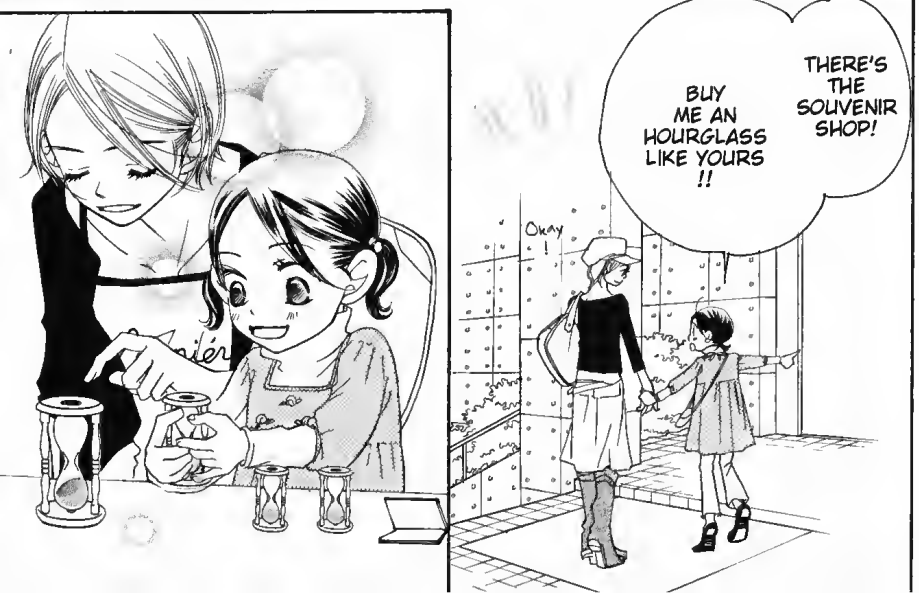

WOW...


HMM...

I didn't notice this last time.
OH, "SINGING SAND"?
SQUEAK SQUEAK
Cool!
It really squeaks!
Sis, come here!
IT BRINGS BACK SO MANY MEMORIES.
Chi was here.
SKRTCH

I THOUGHT THE SAME THING WHEN I WAS 12.
HEH
I thought it'd be bigger.
ONE YEAR IS SMALLER THAN I THOUGHT ...
IT'S BEEN 14 YEARS.
I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED ...
...WHAT IT WOULD FEEL LIKE ...
...THE NEXT TIME I SAW IT.
AND... I FEEL AT PEACE.




BUY ME AN HOURGLASS LIKE YOURS !!
THERE'S THE SOUVENIR SHOP!
Okay

COME ON, ANN!
We'll miss the train!

-◆- The End -◆-

I gave Ann a lot of personality traits and disturbing behaviors which are usually assigned to the heroine's rival— which may have bothered some of you. My thanks to everyone who was tolerant and rooted for her up to the very end. This series isn't perfect, so I feel lucky that I got to write it all the way to the end.

-◆-

I had a lot of help from my editor, whose advice was always spot on; my assistants, who drew such gorgeous backgrounds; F-san, who helped me with the Shimane dialect; H-san, who helped me get the Okayama dialect right; and so many others.

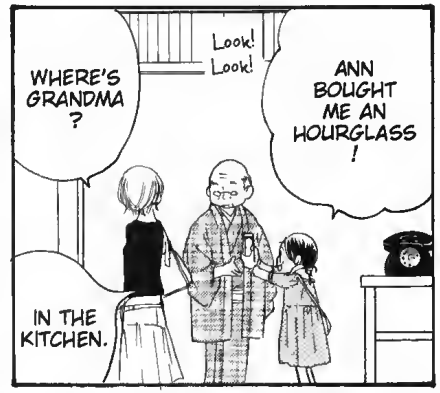
Thank you so much to all of you!

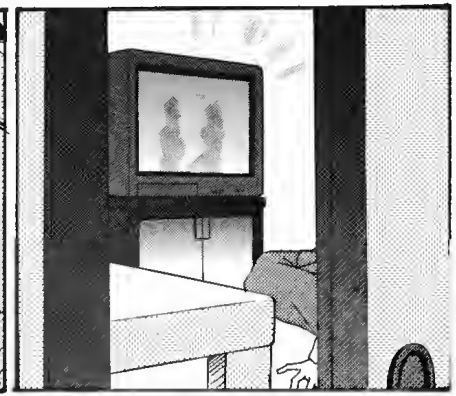
-◆-

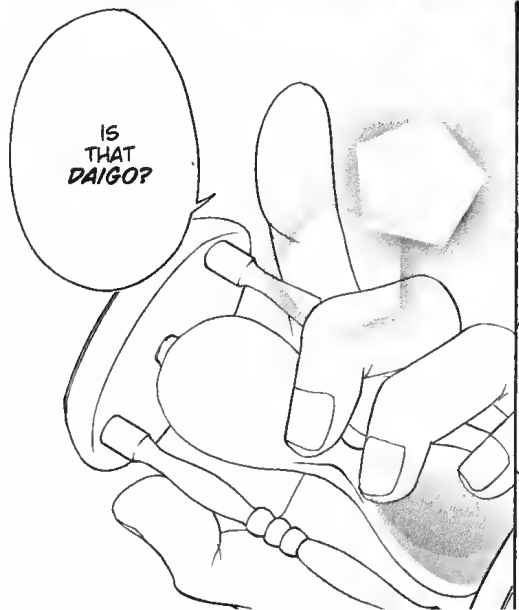
10/7/05 Hinako Ashihara

HEY.
How've you been?

GRAND-MA!
I'm here!

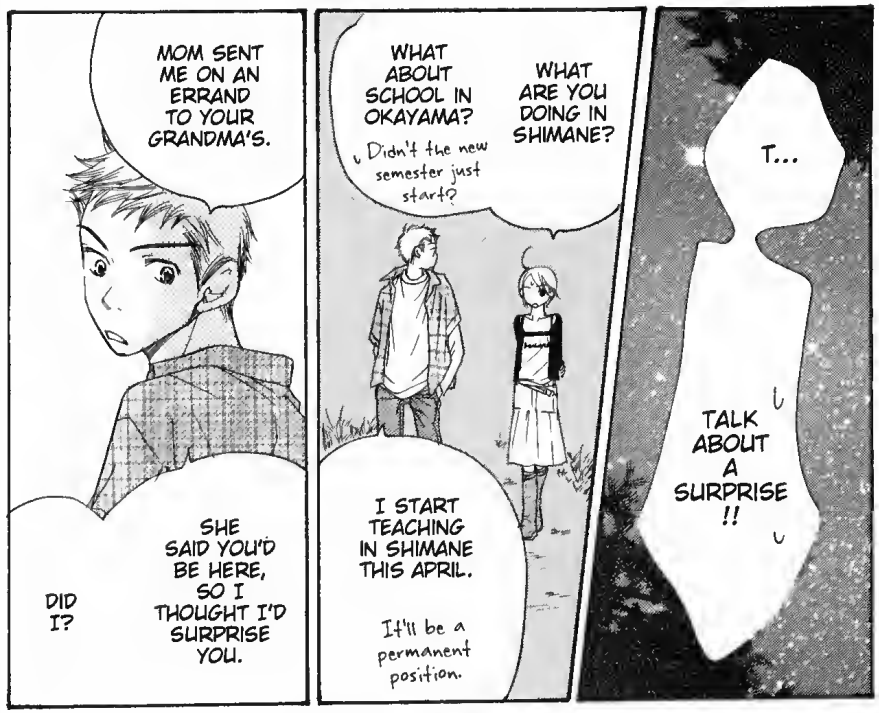

Look! Look!
WHERE'S GRANDMA?
ANN BOUGHT ME AN HOURGLASS!
IN THE KITCHEN.

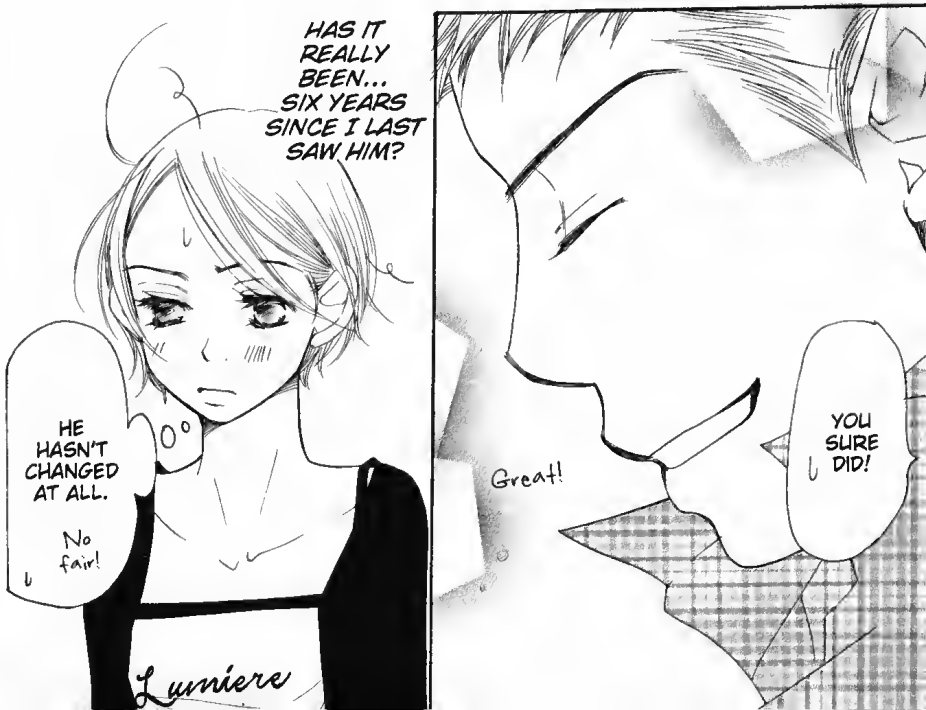



IS THAT DAIGO?

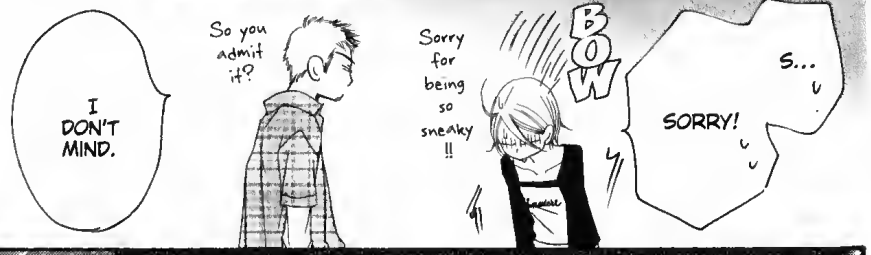
...
TUG
YES, CHI?

BUT EVERY-THING'S ALL RIGHT NOW.
I CAN FACE HIM.
CONGRAT-ULATIONS ON YOUR MARRIAGE.


MOM SENT ME ON AN ERRAND TO YOUR GRANDMA'S.
SHE SAID YOU'D BE HERE, SO I THOUGHT I'D SURPRISE YOU.
DID I?
WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL IN OKAYAMA?
Didn't the new semester just start?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN SHIMANE?
I START TEACHING IN SHIMANE THIS APRIL.
It'll be a permanent position.
T...
TALK ABOUT A SURPRISE !!


HAS IT REALLY BEEN... SIX YEARS SINCE I LAST SAW HIM?
HE HASN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
No fair!
Lumiere
Great!
YOU SURE DID!

He knew!
YOU CAME, DIDN'T YOU...?
TO MY SCHOOL IN OKAYAMA?
On the sly...
UH ...
DAM-MIT!


I DON'T MIND.
So you admit it?
Sorry for being so sneaky !!
BOW
S...
SORRY!

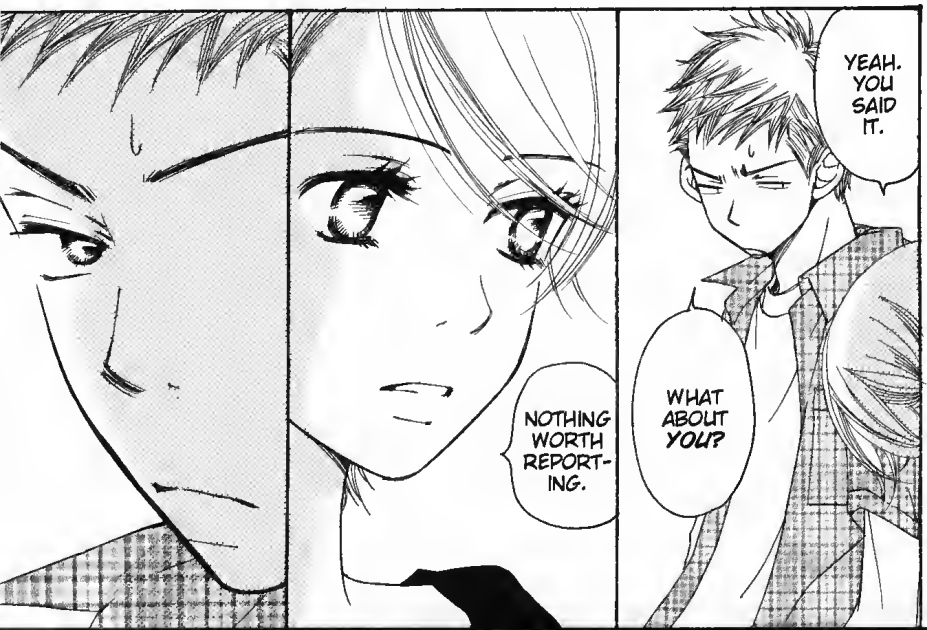
WHAT?!
I'M NOT MARRYING ...
...MS. YOSHI.
IT'S JUST GOSSIP, YOU KNOW.

UM...
...ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT MS. YOSHI?
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT HER FROM MY STUDENT?
UH... Um.

AND I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
I'M GLAD I CAN TELL YOU THAT IN PERSON.

I WANT YOU...
...TO BE HAPPY.

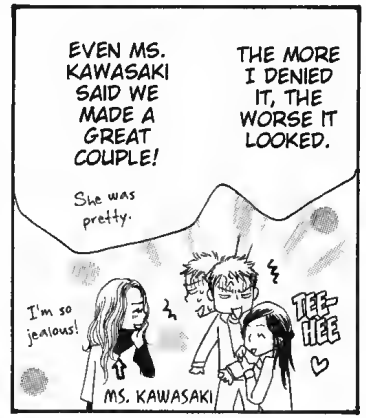
BUT RELATION-SHIPS...
...SOME-TIMES THEY START EASY...
...BUT THEY ALWAYS END UP BEING HARD.
ARRGH
IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVEN'T HAD ANY CHANCES IN THE LAST SIX YEARS, YOU KNOW!!
THE WORLD IS FULL OF WOMEN WHO ARE MY TYPE!!
YEAH, WHAT-EVER.


NOTHING WORTH REPORT-ING.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
YEAH. YOU SAID IT.

24
I USED TO HANG OUT AT THEIR PLACE A LOT.
Haven't you had enough ?!
I'll go too I wanna buy ice.
Kitamura, go get more booze!
THE NEXT THING I KNEW, WE WERE SPOTTED TOGETHER.

A shifty-looking guy...
ANOTHER TEACHER NAMED OKAMOTO IS.
THEY'RE LIVING TOGETHER.
And getting married soon.

I'M JUST ...
DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR ME!
...LETTING IT SINK IN.
My mistake.
I DON'T!


EVEN MS. KAWASAKI SAID WE MADE A GREAT COUPLE!
THE MORE I DENIED IT, THE WORSE IT LOOKED.
She was pretty.
I'm so jealous!
TEE-HEE
MS. KAWASAKI

Ms Kawasaki? This is getting confusing ..
WHY THE SAD FACE?

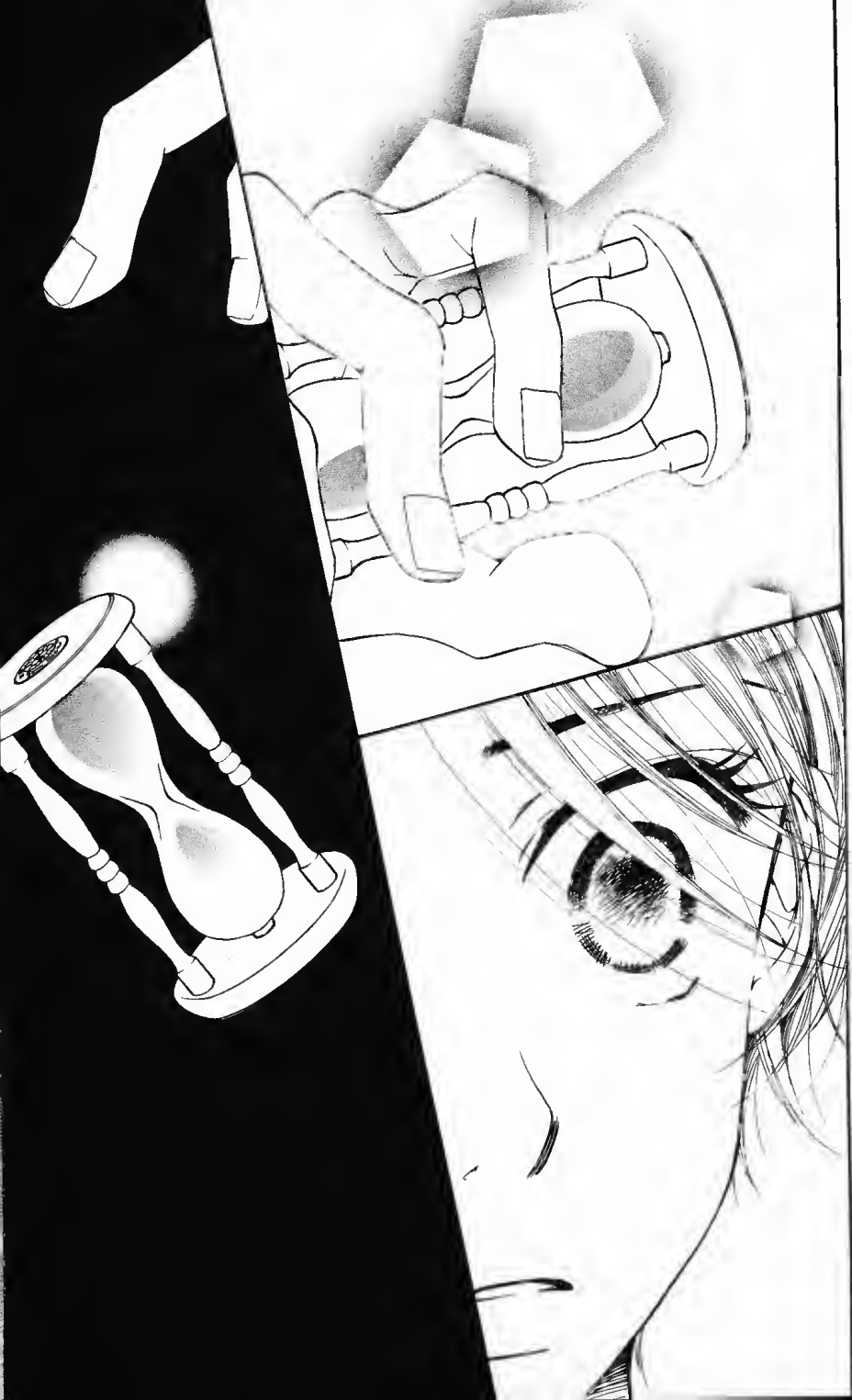
NOW?!
IT WOULD NEVER WORK.
NO, NOW IS THE BEST TIME!

YOU KNOW WHAT?
YOU'VE GOTTEN BETTER ...
...AT PLAYING THESE GAMES.
Work with me here.
NO...
...I'LL JUST GET RIGHT TO THE POINT.
LET'S GET BACK TOGETHER.
YOU AND ME.

I'M NOT REALLY SURE.
BUT WHAT IS "HAPPY"?
I CAN'T SAY...
...THAT I'M HAPPY RIGHT NOW.

THERE'S A LID FOR EVERY BROKEN POT.
...YOU'RE MY TYPE.
...
Broken pot..
ANYWAY ...
WE DON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS.

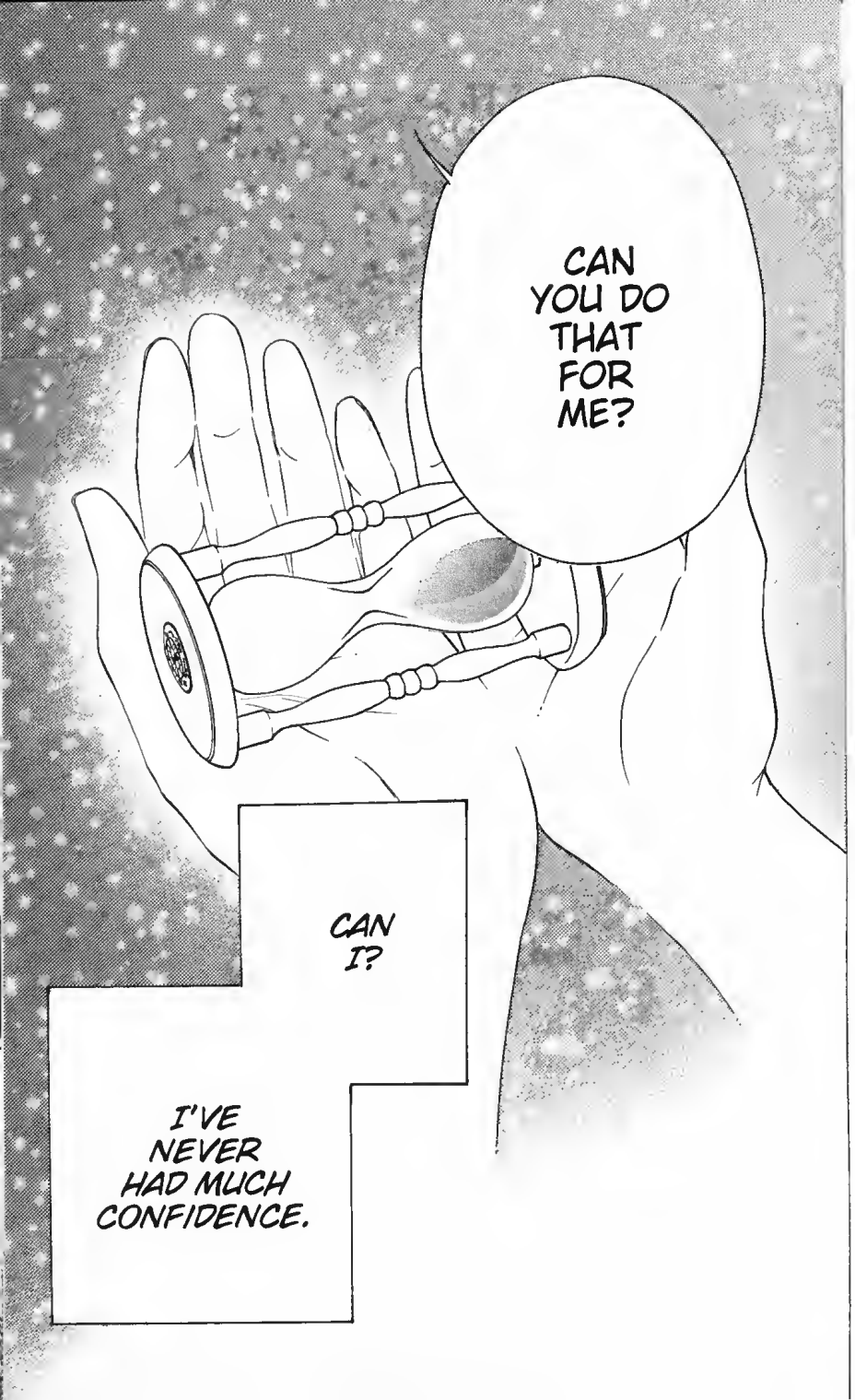
THAT WINTER ...
...YOUR GRANDMA MADE ME PROMISE...
...TO BE HAPPY.



SO
MAKE ME
HAPPY.

IT'S OKAY.
PAT
NGH...
MAKE YOU HAPPY?

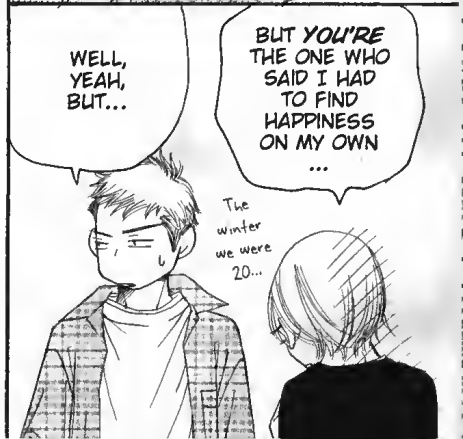
"I WILL...
"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."


CAN YOU DO THAT FOR ME?
CAN I?
I'VE NEVER HAD MUCH CONFIDENCE.

I JUST WANT ...
...YOU...
...NEXT TO ME. I MISS YOUR SMILE.

YOU'RE ASKING ME...
YES, YOU.

...TO MAKE YOU HAPPY?
YES.


BUT YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID I HAD TO FIND HAPPINESS ON MY OWN ...
WELL, YEAH, BUT...
The winter we were 20...

...I'M NOT AFRAID ANY-MORE.
YES.

KLNCH
BUT NOW ...

JUST BEING WITH HIM WOULD BREAK MY HEART.
PAT

I PROMISE.
I WILL...
...MAKE YOU HAPPY!
...
HEH...
?!
WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING ?!!
HEH HEH
UH... Sorry.
lumière

WE'RE COMPLETE IDIOTS.
Royal fools...
WELL, WHO CARES?
WE MAY BE STUPID...

BECAUSE WE MUST SEEM SO STUPID.
I MEAN, THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING WE'VE GONE THROUGH...
Everyone will laugh at us
Yeah, you're right...

...BUT AT LEAST...
...I'M A LITTLE HAPPIER NOW.

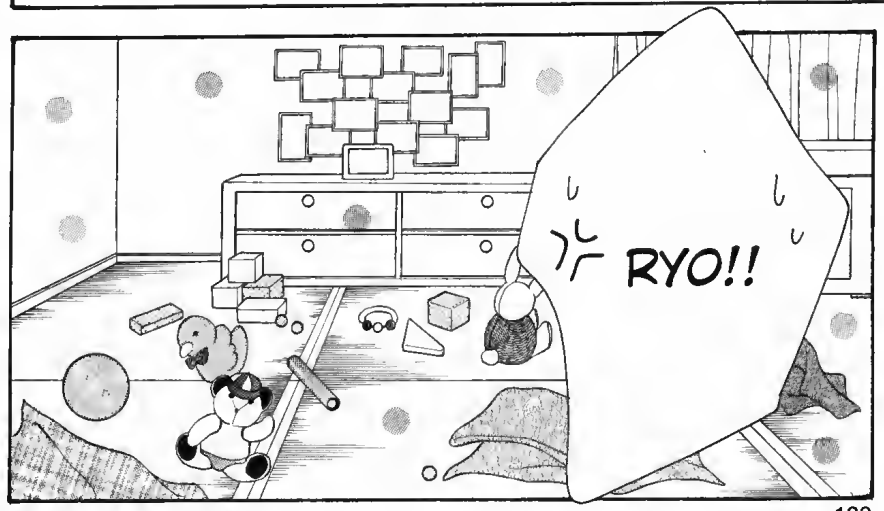
WE
WERE
...

AND EVEN NOW...
WE GOT LOST AGAIN AND AGAIN ...
WE STUMBLED ...
TOK

...ALWAYS IN THE SAND.
CONFUSED... UNABLE TO SEE AHEAD CLEARLY...

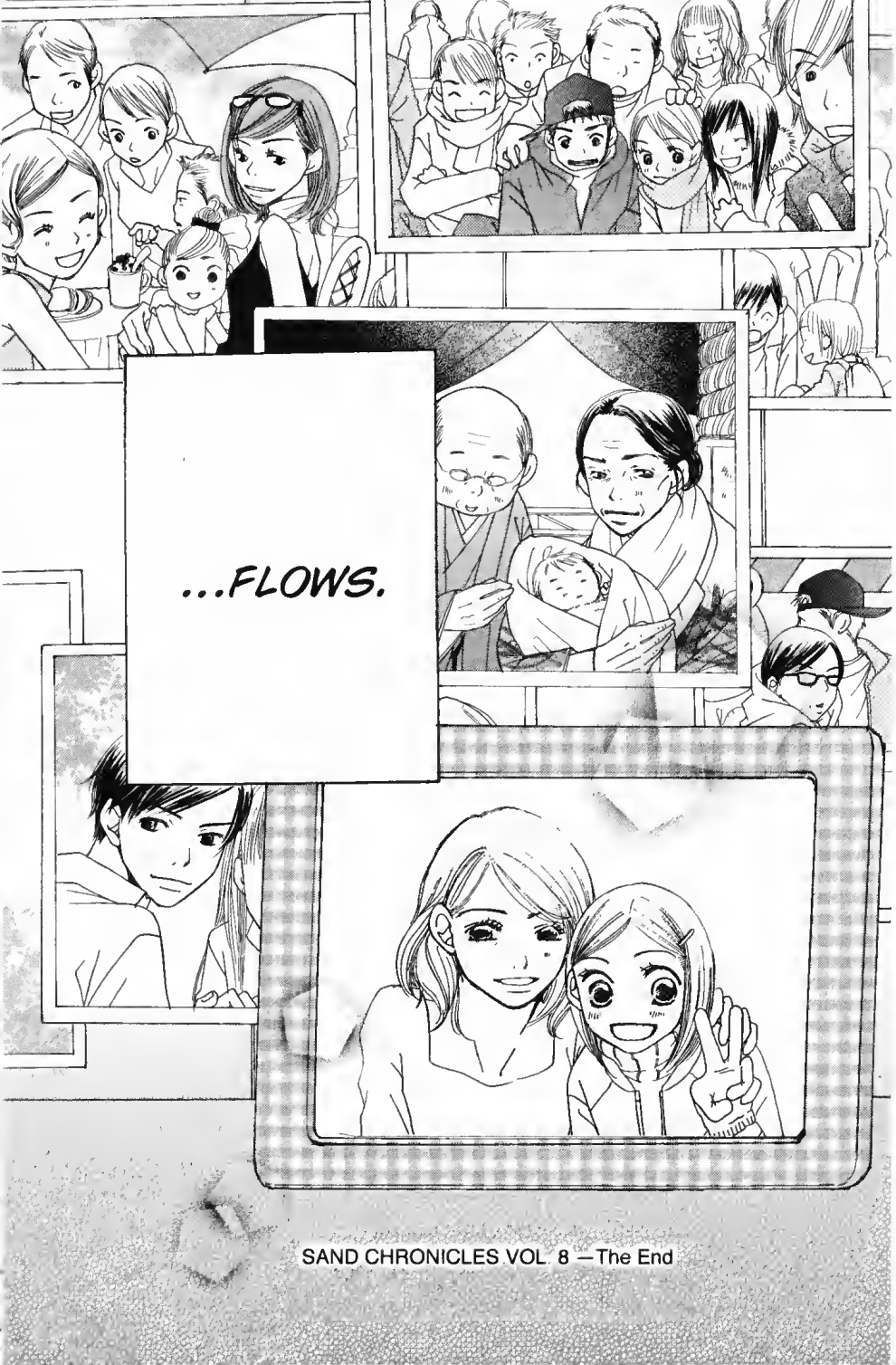
BA
M
...PUT ON YOUR PANTS !!
WIIIIIIIIII
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE ...
WHOOOSH
DON'T KICK THE DOOR OPEN !!!
SUPER TOT!
!!!
DAIGO!

ZSSSH
...WE'RE STILL IN THE SAND.


RYO!!

WHEEE!
CATCH HIM!!!
WHEEE!

THE SAND ...


...FLOWS.

...STILL
...

Glossary

If only adolescence came with an instruction manual.
We can't give you that, but this glossary of terms
might prove useful for this volume.

Page 14, panel 1: *nimono*
Potatoes, vegetables, pork or root vegetables simmered in a soy sauce broth.

Page 14, panel 2: *kinpira gobo*
Julienned burdock root that is sautéed and simmered.

Page 22, panel 4: *kinako* bread
Bread made of soybean flour.

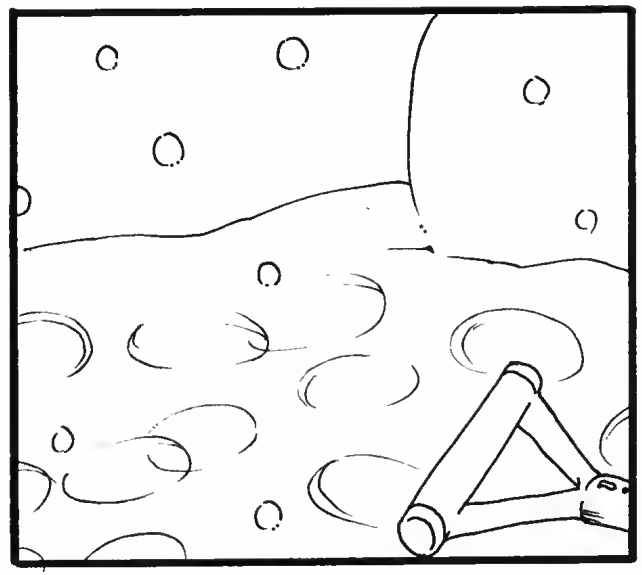
Page 82, panel 7: *Tondo*
A Shinto fire festival where votive tablets, among other things, are ritually burned.

Page 100, panel 2: *kotatsu*
A table with a blanket and heater underneath. In the colder months, people sit or lie with their legs under the blanket.

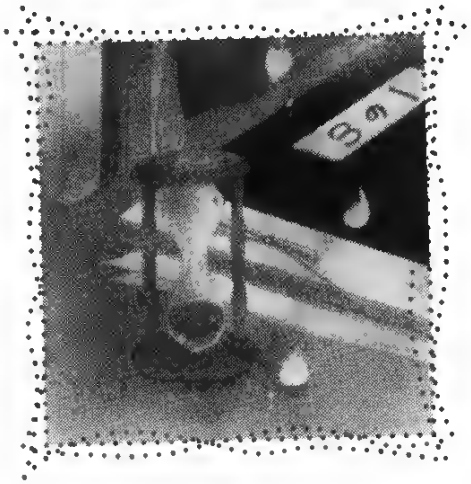
Page 115, panel 3: *shochu*
An alcoholic drink sometimes made from potatoes.

Page 121, panel 4: *miai*
A meeting between two individuals seeking a spouse and their families. It's one of the steps toward an arranged marriage.

Page 162, panel 2: a lid for every broken pot
A proverb meaning that for every person out there, no matter how weird, there's a fitting partner.



Profile of Hinako Ashihara



This is the final volume! No, not really. The series will continue until volume 10. After this one, though, the stories will be bonus stories.

Now you're in the know!
—Hinako Ashihara

Hinako Ashihara won the 50th Shogakukan Manga Award for *Sunadokei*. She debuted with *Sono Hanashi Okotowari Shimasu* in *Bessatsu Shojo Comics* in 1994. Her other works include *SOS*, *Forbidden Dance*, and *Tennen Bitter Chocolate*.

ely reversed. This preserves
on of the original artwork–
Check out the diagram
to get the hang of
hen turn to the
the book to